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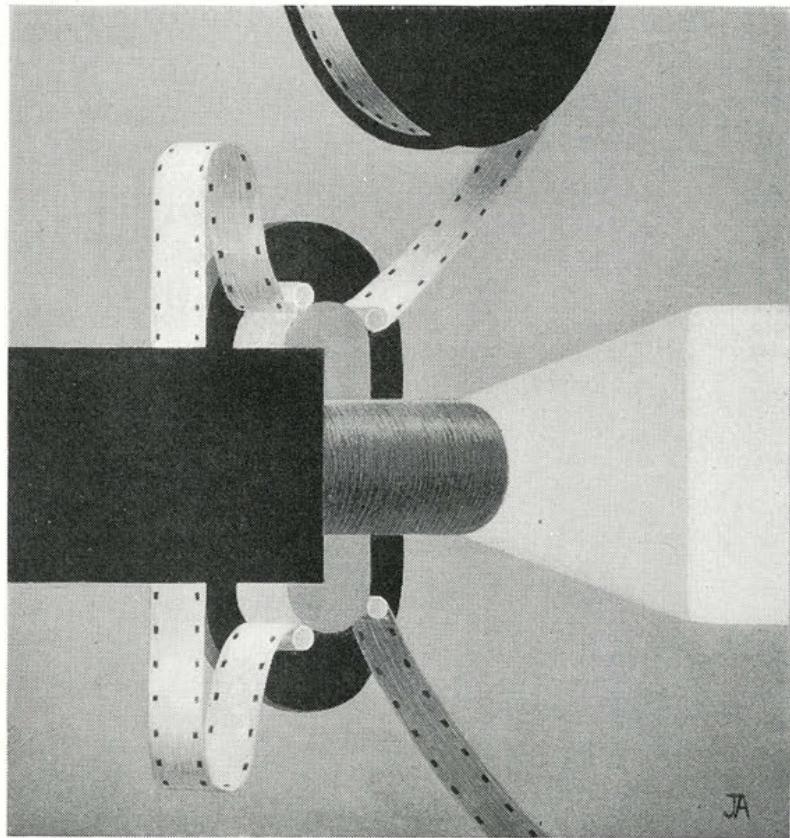
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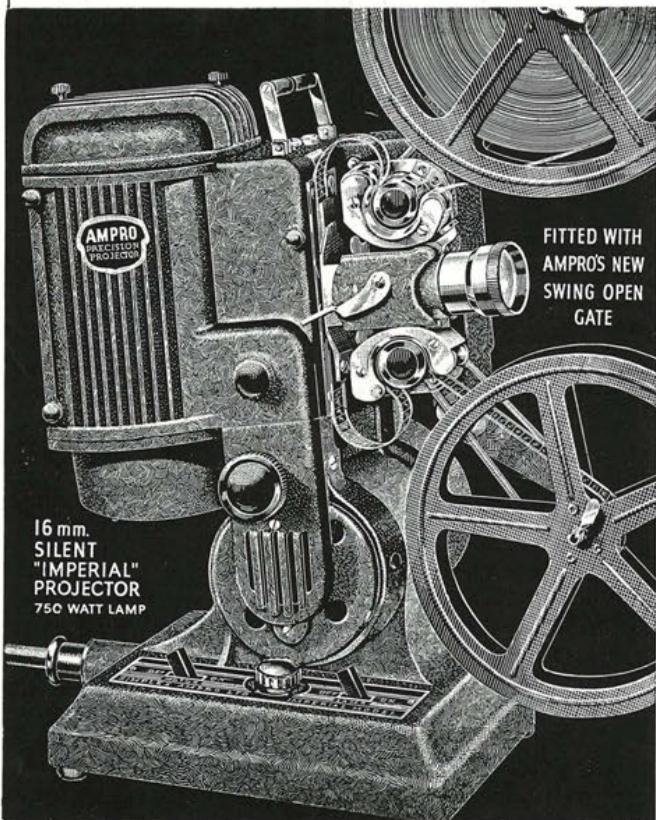


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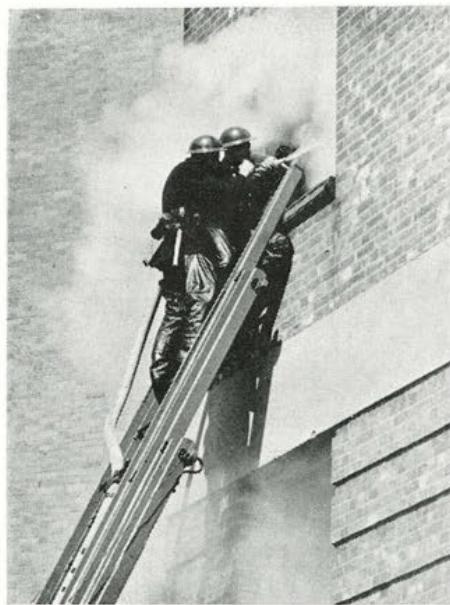
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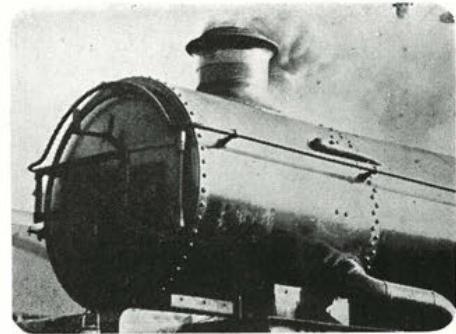
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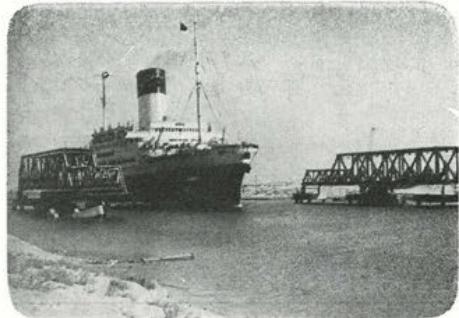
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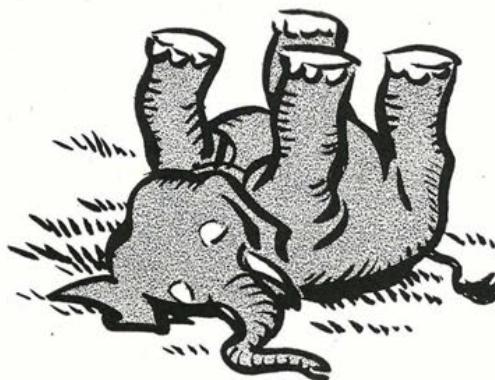
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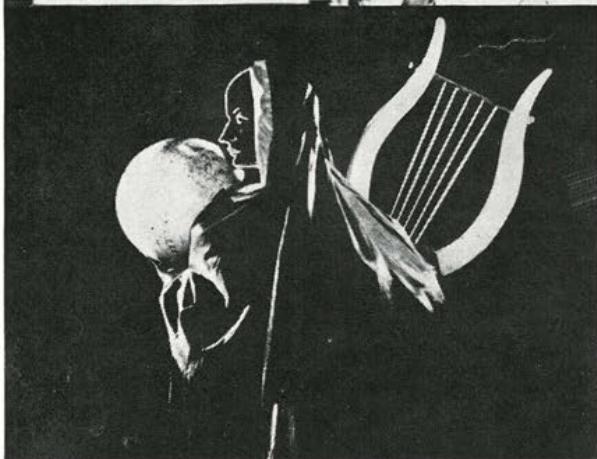
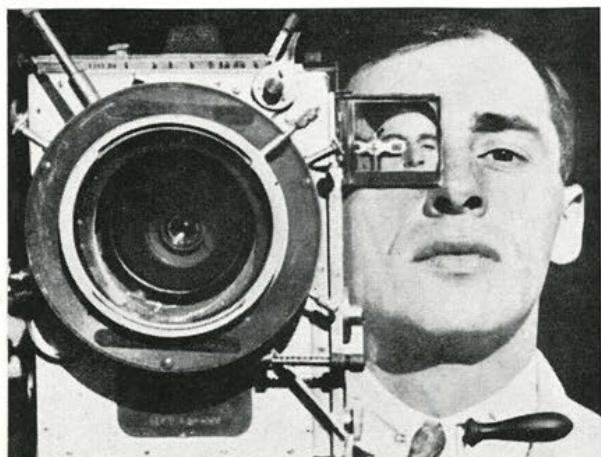
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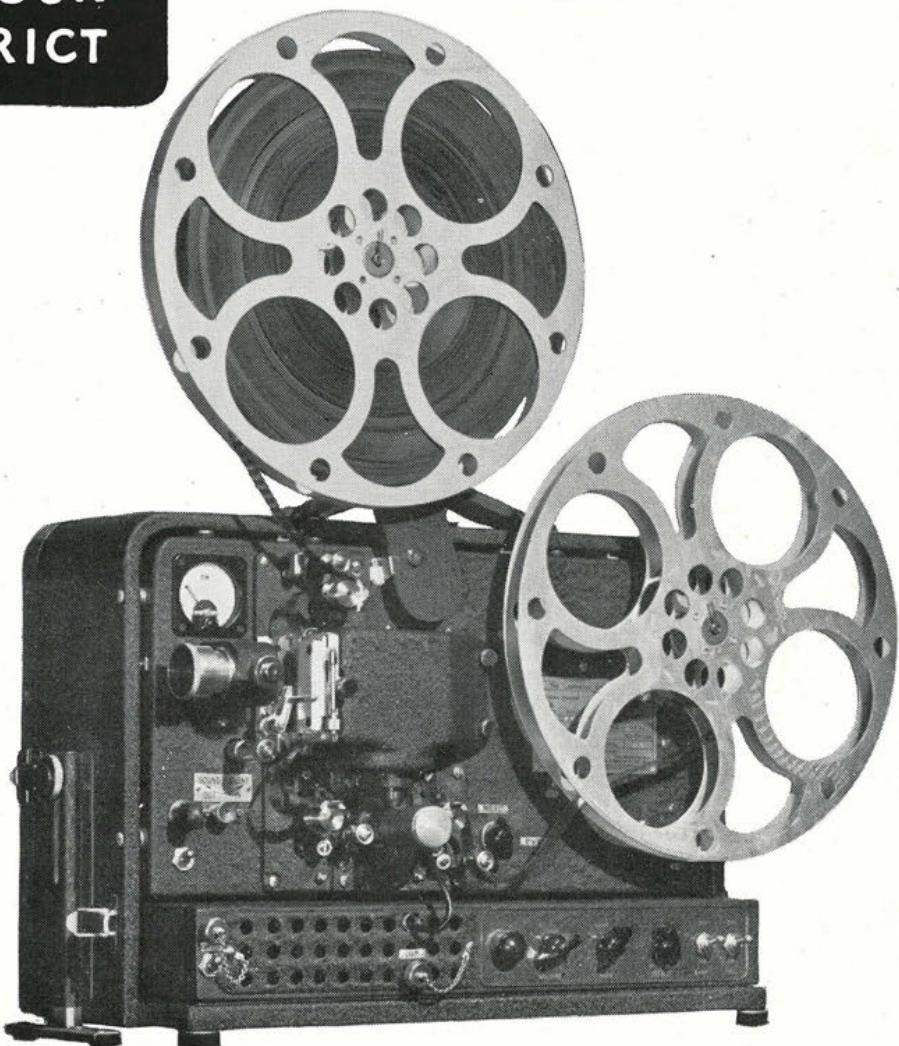
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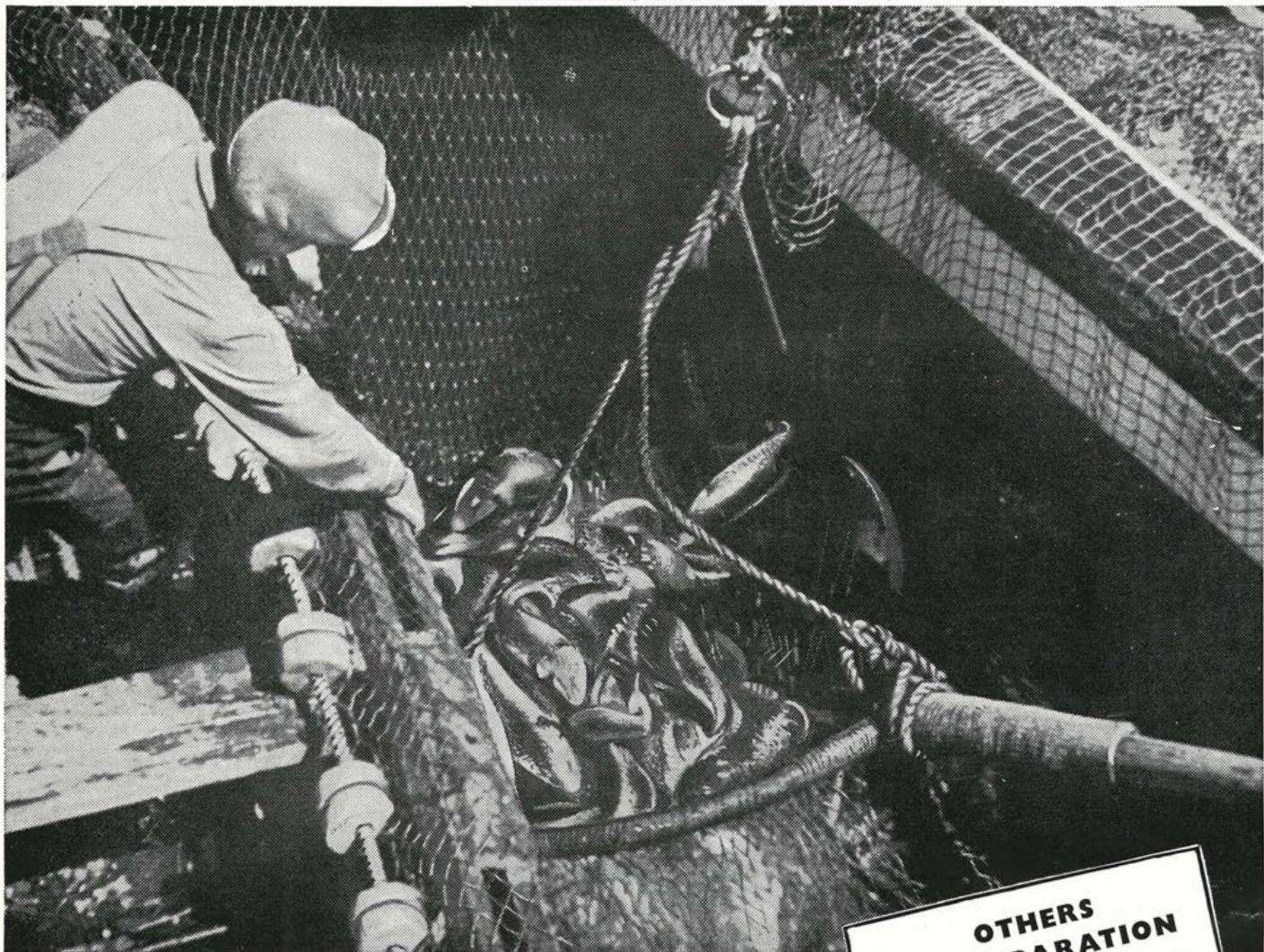
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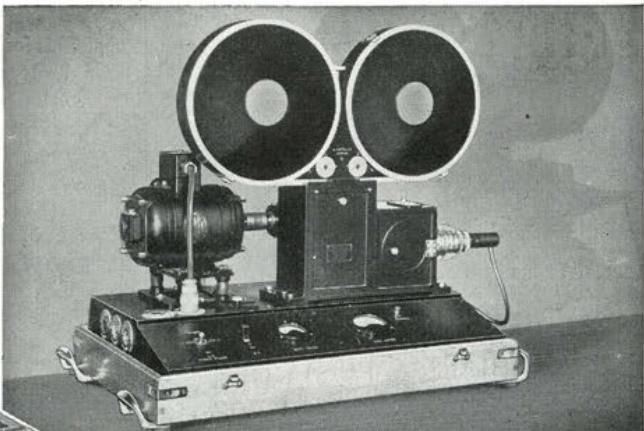
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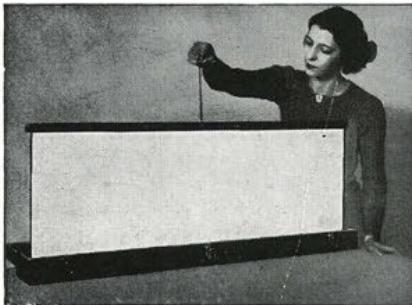
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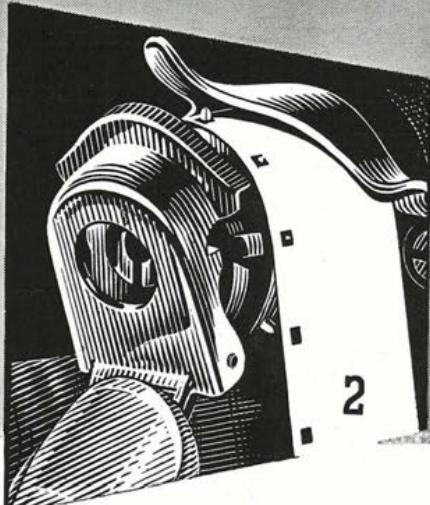
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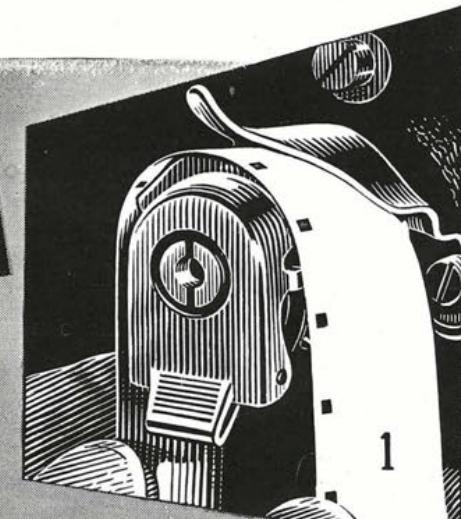
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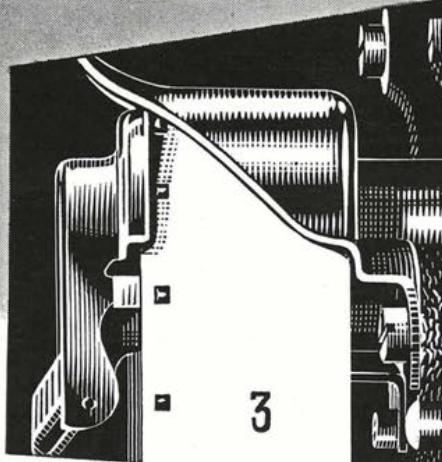
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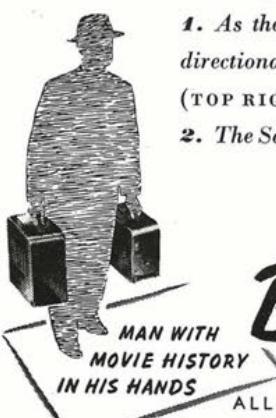
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## **THE FILM AND THE COMMONWEALTH**

*Much interest has been aroused by the British Film Institute's Conference on "The Film in Colonial Development" held in London in January. A report of the Conference, including the speeches of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, John Grierson (then of U.N.E.S.C.O), George Pearson of the Colonial Film Unit, and many others, is available from the Institute (5 shillings post free). On the following pages, since we think the subject is of importance, we reprint John Grierson's speech, together with the views of a young Gold Coast Student and two articles on the film in Southern Rhodesia and Malaya.*

# THE FILM IN BRITISH COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT

By

JOHN GRIERSON

NOTHING IN THE WORLD is so striking to-day as the fact that the peoples of the world are on the move, not only physically but spiritually. One sees more than half the world restive in its illiteracy and half the world in various stages of revolt against the particular conditions in which men live. There is a challenge to-day to every department of every government, and not least to those departments involved in the processes of education. The challenge goes out to every thinking citizen because it is nothing less than the result of the world's own riches, of man's collective technological advances and of the enormous gap in their distribution and enjoyment, the gaps that have so often challenged the processes of education and have so often failed to be understood by them.

Abraham Lincoln said that "Man could not exist half-slave and half-free". Julian Huxley, in one of his introductions recently, paraphrased this and said, "Man cannot exist half-illiterate and half-literate", and he said it for the good reason that the whole question of peace and international understanding depends in the last resort on access to the means and skills of the modern world for which people are reaching out with desperate hands; it depends on equality in the matter of race, in the matter of sex privilege, and in all matters of social benefit. It depends on them because you cannot have peace in a world where there are vast fields of frustration, whether it be on the economic or the cultural level, and where prides are hurt by the assertions and assumptions of some of our Western peoples. In fine, you cannot have international understanding while half the world, or more than half the world, either lacks the capacity for understanding or the will toward it.

What the film can do for international understanding therefore depends not on knowing how to film, how to stand behind a camera and turn a handle, but on our concept of social responsibility. Films are nothing unless related from the beginning to some sort of understanding of what they are about. The story of the documentary film in so far as it ever got anywhere is that we set ourselves to articulate, within the framework of realistic social processes, the problems or the particulars we had to teach.

If we talk about international understanding, we should therefore be clear about our purpose in this task, about the substance of the matter, and then the technical side will safely take care of itself. For Unesco the substance of the task is the duty of Fundamental Education. I am not brushing aside studies of what the African thinks of our American and British films, nor am I brushing aside the pictures, which can be pretty absurd, when we sit around in England and elsewhere and enjoy the romantic and exotic side of other people working for us. I believe the essence of the matter is an African matter in the case of Africa, and is a native citizen matter wherever the Colonies are concerned. It is a case of using all our modern powers to establish others in equality with ourselves.

At Unesco's Mexico Conference in December, there was a definition made of the scope and purpose of Fundamental Education. It was laid down that Fundamental Education should be specially and immediately concerned with the less advanced regions of the world and with the underprivileged groups in industrialised countries, where the education provided falls below the essential minimum, where ignorance and illiteracy, disease and poverty constitute a hindrance to human progress and a barrier to international understanding and world prosperity. The Conference went on to say that there had been a tendency, when the term "Fundamental Education" was first used, to regard it as no more and no less than a campaign against illiteracy, but it soon became clear that the skills of reading and writing were only of value as a means to a wider end.

## LITERACY NOT FIRST OBJECT

This wider aim of Fundamental Education has now been defined. It is to help men and women to live fuller lives in adjustment with their changing environment, to develop the best elements of their own culture, and to achieve the economic and social progress which will enable them to take their place in the world. Fundamental Education should thus be designed to provide a first step to further education. While universal literacy may be a desirable ideal, the teaching of reading and writing is not the only, or even always the most immediate, purpose of Fundamental Education.

The work of the Mexican Cultural Missions provided a striking case in point. The whole life of one remote little Indian village, which was visited by delegates from the General Conference, was being transformed by a team of six "Fundamental Educators". They were teaching the peasants to pipe their water supply, to combat disease, to grow better fruit and crops, to build weather-proof houses and make decent furniture, to bake better bread and to weave and sew; but they had not so far taught them to read and write. However, the foundations of a village school had been laid. So it is with Fundamental Education: Literacy teaching and the extension and improvement of primary schooling will take their place in a wider programme of community education for better living.

For Unesco this question is a world-wide problem. We are concerned with creating an information service as a link between all such experiments across the world (and there are many), so that each will benefit from the experience of the others, whether in technical training or in other ways. We are setting up a panel of some hundred experts across the world and are arranging to correlate the information they have and the information their various projects develop. We have set up three pilot projects in Fundamental Education, one in Haiti, one in British East Africa

and one in China. We are setting up another, probably in Peru, this next year. The point about these pilot projects is that we take an area, a fairly large area, a backward area, and there we bring all modern forces to bear on its development so that it becomes an example of tested technique, not only for the wider areas about, but for the whole world.

Over and above that, we have joined up with many associated projects across the world. There are experiments in China, in Latin America, and in the Southern states of the U.S. We are setting up one seminar on the positive experience of the Americans in developing the very high standards they have reached in some areas of Negro education. There will be another seminar on African problems this year in London, another one in China and another in the Middle East. We are concerned in all of them with studies of racial problems and prejudices, questions of sex inequality in particular areas and, not least, we are much concerned in the study of the teaching of languages, how best to teach languages, not necessarily in the old way but in terms of the living interests of the natives themselves, and finally in the study of what has and can be done in mass communications to help this work of fundamental education along.

Our Unesco work in Fundamental Education is only one part of Unesco's programme and is limited by budget. Its success must depend on national effort. So we arrive at the paradox which some of us have known all our lives, that internationalism begins in the nations, and for many of our immediate tasks, it begins at home.

#### A CHALLENGE

While this question of Fundamental Education is a world problem, the United Kingdom has some special interests and some special responsibilities in respect of the Colonies. We live to-day with shrinking horizons from the national point of view, and Africa, in particular, I would say, is one of the great privileges of modern citizenship as far as Britain is concerned. It represents an economic potential which is enormous, with power to extend not just the horizon of England's economy but the entire horizon of its national morale; with pioneering of all kinds there to be done, as always in the story of the British Empire, pioneering in the development of tropical agriculture and medicine, and tropical living in general.

The old Empire Marketing Board had something to do with the study of nutrition, medicine and agriculture in Africa. In Kenya and elsewhere it did something to establish a scientific future for the African communities. Enormous strides have been made in engineering, with new possibilities of water power supplies and community building in relation to the development of power. There are new possibilities in education and I mean new possibilities in the sociological approach to education: in the relation of technological progress to health services, to community services, to managerial and other services.

There is another sort of challenge and that is the challenge from within. I do not think that a nation which has gone through the last twenty-five years of social progress and has seen the enormous advances in the lives and prospects of British workers, can afford to put an iron curtain round the British Isles in respect of social progress.

The whole implication of British social history, of British social policy and political policy, demands recognition of the fact that we are not a nation of 50 million people to-day

but a nation of 113 million people, white, black and others. We are a nation with a population rather larger than White Russia proper and only 25 millions less than the United States itself. Our governmental responsibilities are not a question only of Grantham, Birmingham, Leeds and Hull, but also of Nyasaland, Nigeria, Tanganyika and Kenya, and of the other colonies outside Africa. The challenge from within, I think, will grow.

There is another challenge. Hitler, not of pleasant memory, once used the phrase of England's colonies, that we were allowing "cobwebs to grow in our treasure house". I shall not say much about that, except to emphasise that international criticism is growing on how we use and develop our work in the Colonies. We are, in particular, challenged from without in respect of fundamental education, and not least by the Soviet Union where, in a period of less than twenty-five years, illiteracy has been practically wiped out by a plan of education involving the use of 90 regional languages. The examples in Mexico, China and elsewhere, are there also to challenge us to the effort of which, I am sure, we are increasingly conscious to-day.

Nor can we forget the United Nations. With the work of the Security Council, the FAO, the WHO, the ILO and Unesco, it has established for the first time in history a world conscience in respect of what to do not only with health and with education, but also, and very fundamentally, what to do with the economic resources of the world so that the world's needs can be integrated and filled.

But our most profound challenge, and the one that will have to be met, whether we like it or not, comes to us from the native peoples themselves. The achievements of our own Negro populations, for instance, and those of the American Negroes in various fields of science and medicine, education, music and writing, are progressively creating a powerful body of world opinion. They have in many quarters an inspired voice, and stand to give notable support to the processes of Fundamental Education in Africa and America over the next generation. I find in France a new group under the title "Presence Africaine", in which the best writers of French Africa have got together to produce a review of the greatest things of note in all fields of negro expression. Groups like this represent, not only an expression of culture, but a watch on the interests of the African in the course of our next generation's development.

My main proposition, therefore, is that it is not a question of films coming from outside but of films being created from the inside by and for the Colonial peoples themselves. I am going to say directly that there is now no considerable body of knowledge in this field. Some experiments have been made, but in pretty piece-meal fashion. There is no body of knowledge, I think, because no sufficient interest has been created, no sufficient funds have been found, and no adequate organisation has been established for the task in hand. We start almost at scratch. I am not for a moment forgetting the pioneer work of the Colonial Film Unit, nor the experiments made by other countries. But against the size and urgency of the task we have scarcely begun.

The first necessity is that we find a body of men who will make this their lifework, who will specialise in this as one of the inspiring tasks of our time, and begin with a proper knowledge of the Colonies. It is no longer a question of people dropping into Africa to make a picture, to "do something" for the natives, as only a generation ago the Squire and his lady "did something" for us. That does not

reflect the size or nature of the problem. We have got to create a body of men who live and work with the African problem, who are the African problem in its creative aspect, knowing it and living with it. It is essentially a problem of development on the economic, technological, social and cultural levels. It involves sympathy with the cultures in the areas we are concerned with. It involves planned, clear-cut, and intensive processes of technical training, of health education, of community training and management on the part of the natives.

We are faced by many patterns of development. In one area the Colonial Office is developing native communities within the tribal pattern. Other patterns involve the uprooting of the natives and their emergence in industrial colonies. In others again we have them landed rootless in the great metropolitan areas like Capetown and Chicago and Detroit.

### THREE PROJECTS

As a matter of primary emphasis, I am going to ask you to consider the creation in Britain of a *School of the Colonies* in which we can mobilise and integrate a body of knowledge, not only in respect of colonial management but in respect of the relations between all the creative arts and the experimental forms of colonial administration. One of the most striking developments in the Soviet experiment was the establishment of a special corps of "soldiers of education and culture". These people went out into all the 200 different racial groupings of the U.S.S.R., asked themselves where education really and genuinely began, and did not always necessarily begin with teaching literacy. I think we ourselves need something of this sort in our own approach to the problem of Fundamental Education in the Colonies. We want, for this school, not only the experience of the Colonial Office; we also have to know what is being done elsewhere and bring world-wide experience to bear on our problem. We will need a first-class library, a growing and developing information service, an exchange of teachers and lecturers and other people interested in colonial problems.

The second project, I think, must be a considered and ambitious development of the *Colonial Film Unit*. I don't mean it should be developed as a British Unit, as a Unit resident here, but rather as a Unit truly decentralised in Colonial terms. It is not a question of making films here for Africa and bringing films out of Africa for the people here to see. It is a question of working with Africans and of creating a genuine African Unit that can work with native units in the other Colonies. It is a question of sending out experts to teach natives, help natives in the technical processes involved, and also a question of giving scholarships, bringing natives out from Africa and from the Colonies so that they have the benefit of our technical experience here at home and in those other countries which have advanced in the techniques of films, film strips and other forms of simplified teaching of a visual order.

Finally, we need to have a *School of Film Experiment* on Fundamental Education. I hope it will be an African School of Film Experiment. Walt Disney has made some films on health for the Indians of Latin America. Some other units have been experimenting in the teaching of language, particularly in relation to the spontaneous interest of the people concerned. Other relevant experiments have been

made in simplified writing and simplified illustration; and no country has gone so far in certain forms of wall newspaper display and exhibition as England. We have much to bring together so that our new problems of education can have the full benefit of the varied techniques which from one motive or another have been developed in our time.

Above all, we should have a great concern for the psychological problems involved in the making of films in this particular field. Here I quote from a letter sent me by my friend Richard Wright, the Negro writer of "Bright and Morning Star" and "Native Son".

"Undoubtedly, such an impact of Western ideas and methods upon African natives will mean a disruption of their communal, fragile, traditional, tribal and almost sacred institutions. Means will have to be found to enable a smooth and all but painless adaptation of these institutions to the Western method of working and living. Let me cite just one important psychological problem involved. In Africa, for the most part, individual will and initiative are almost unknown and are largely considered sinful. All work and endeavour are done under the guidance of traditional ceremony. Now, with the introduction of vast schemes for increasing production, one will find that individual effort will not only be encouraged to come to the fore but must be rewarded. Indeed, the instilling of the desire for individual initiative in Africans can be a great gift which the Western world can offer to people slumbering in a kind of cosmic silence. And I can tell you that this lack of individual initiative in the Africans is deeply regretted by most educated Africans I have met; these educated Africans know that this is one of their great handicaps, and if the British programme can help in this direction, it will have made a lasting and proud contribution to the peoples of Africa. What I mean, concretely, is that Africans must be drawn into the actual management and policy-making councils of these projected enterprises".

These are some of the problems and possibilities to which, I think, consideration should be given. The first of my propositions is that the heart of the matter lies in the subject matter; secondly, that appropriate machinery should be created—(a) in the form of a School of the Colonies; (b) in the development of the Colonial Film Unit with true regard for decentralisation and the part which natives will play in it; (c) in the form of an African School of Film Experiment.

These tasks seem to me not just minor tasks for Britain to-day but priority tasks, and among the most privileged which face the present generation of British men and women.

I conclude in the dark voice of Richard Wright and not in my own white one.

"I feel this will be the first time that a collective and scientific effort has been made by Western civilisation to meet the needs of colonial people. One need not be at all ashamed that the motives which are spurring the British are those of self-interest; indeed, such motives, in my opinion, can guarantee objectivity and rationality and help rule out irrational racial fears on both sides. Such a project can be made into a model of colonial engineering for all other nations to emulate. . . . I think that such a programme will be one of the big stories of the world. What is done by the British in Africa to help feed themselves can lift the level of life of millions of negroes and will constitute a truly historic and magnificent undertaking".

# THE TWO WORLDS

By

A. R. BAËTA

*Miss Baëta, a young student from the Gold Coast, was present at the Conference and contributes these comments:*

EVERY PICTURE, inasmuch as it puts ideas into the minds of people, is educational. This is even more so at home in the Gold Coast, West Africa, where the mass of people are illiterates and have very little chance of knowing about people in other parts of the world. To them anything on the screen is a true picture of life in the country in which the film is made.

This however is not true with the big towns where the cinema is no novelty. People in the big towns understand about films almost just as well as the ordinary people who see the films in England. But films do leave certain impressions on the minds of people especially where very little is known about the matter depicted on the screen. Unfortunately many of the films shown at home do not give a very good picture of Western life.

If you ask anyone who enjoys seeing films at home to describe an American, he is sure to tell you the American carries a revolver with him everywhere he goes and shoots on the slightest provocation or that the American never wastes time planning things, but goes in for action and thinks of the results later. If you ask him to describe the French man, he'll give you the picture of a happy, carefree man—not caring what's happening around him, so long as it does not interfere with his happiness. A man who dances every night in magnificent and well-lit halls. If you ask for a description of an Englishman, you'll be given a picture of a well-dressed man, sitting peacefully behind his desk and smoking a cigarette or reading a book.

**It may interest you to know that when I arrived here one and a half years ago with a group of 60 West African students, what surprised us most was to see the porters doing hard manual work in the docks at Glasgow. On the train to London, we talked of hardly anything else apart from the hard-working porters at Glasgow and the fact that one could read a book at 9.30 in the night without the aid of any artificial light (it was summer-time). We see a lot of the "West End" and the sleek motor-cars, but very little of the hard grit which makes the Englishman what he is. People at home will respect the Englishman more, and admire better his sterling qualities if the pictures shown of him depict, a little more, his real character.**



*Good Business*

*Colonial Film Unit*

A fisherman at home will very much like to see an English fisherman at work, and so will a weaver. People at home will be very interested to see the manufacturing machines at work in the big factories. Everything done at home is hand made and takes a lot of time to do, and it will be a great education to show people on the screen how quickly and more easily the same work can be done with machines and probably with better results. It will thrill the cocoa farmer to see his cocoa beans turned into chocolates, etc. School children will like to see what English children do at school. Films of farming and dairying will help the farmers at home to improve their methods and produce more foodstuffs to aid the World's shortage of food. These educational films speak for themselves and will have a welcome both in the country and in the towns.

It is very difficult for people in the rural areas to understand the films, as everything is done in English—a language most of them do not understand. They naturally appreciate more, films that are self-explanatory.

In this connection I wish, with very great respect, to point out that some of the remarks made by the speakers at the Conference of the British Film Institute, about the effect of films on primitive Africans are very far from the truth. I wish, if I may, to deal with some of these remarks.

A speaker said that it was wrong to show people in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast films showing docks and ships. Another suggested that the primitive African will think it magic if he were shown huge electric trains speeding on the countryside.

A man in the northern territories of the Gold Coast is many miles from the sea, and may never have the chance of coming down to the coast. I submit with great respect, that he is the man to see films of the sea and ships and dockyards. It will broaden his horizon if things unknown to him are introduced to him based on what he already knows. It will not be a difficult matter to introduce the sea to him. He knows rivers and understands about lakes and waterfalls. Probably he owns a canoe and paddles himself across the river. This, I think, forms a good basis on which one can build and introduce to him the greater waters elsewhere and the huge canoes (i.e. ships) specially made for such waters. Someone, I believe, has made a film almost on the lines suggested above, showing first a stick floating down with the current of a stream and later a duck swimming against the current, and building on that introduced the sea and the ship. This film, I suggest, will be very much appreciated by the African in the northern territories of the Gold Coast.

Another speaker said that cartoons meant nothing to the primitive African—that Africans do not understand diagrams. I think this a rather sweeping statement to make. *The idea of cartoons is not strange to the African. Our stories and fairy-tales are rife with such things. When these tales are illustrated on paper they are not far from cartoons.* The spider, tortoise, sugar cane and many others are made to play the part of wonderful characters and do very funny things in these stories, and the storyteller's imagination comes into full play. Cartoons on the screen will delight Africans, for it will to them be seeing with your eyes what the storyteller makes you see in your imagination.

#### DIAGRAMS

But, it depends on the type of cartoons shown. What makes an English audience laugh may not necessarily make an African audience laugh. That does not mean that the African lacks a sense of humour, in fact he has a very keen one, but our national background and outlook are so different that it is hardly fair to expect an uneducated African to see through the eyes of an Englishman, though at times we meet on common grounds. Whether cartoons are enjoyed by Africans or not depends on the type of cartoons shown.

Again it is not true to say that Africans do not understand diagrams. Fishermen on the beach, when talking about a particular kind of fish to someone from another tribe who does not know the name of the fish, draw diagrams of it with their fingers in the sands. Cloth weavers draw diagrams of the patterns they weave to prospective customers, whenever they do not happen to carry with them the samples of the cloth they weave. If the illiterate, unsophisticated African draws diagrams to show what he means, it is hardly true to say he does not understand diagrams. Whether the diagrams convey to him the right meaning of the lesson or not depends upon the way the diagram is made and possibly who draws it. It is difficult for someone of another nation to get a lesson across to peoples whose national and spiritual backgrounds

are totally different from his—unless he studies and understands the people with whom he is dealing, he will have very little success. In this connection, may I suggest respectfully that it will save a lot of labour and uncertainty about the suitability of educational films if Africans were trained to write the script.

The educated African knows his people and their point of view in many things, he knows also something of Western civilisation; he, I think, can get a lesson across to his own people better than anyone else. He will need some training and guidance in the work and, considering he may possibly achieve better results, I do not think it a waste of time to train him. If there is need for understanding between English people and the peoples of the Colonies, I think the educated African is better qualified to interpret the English people to his own people, for he knows better what to say to them and how to say it to make them understand.

Listening to some of the remarks (read at the meeting) made by Africans on their impressions of the films they see, it was rather sad to note how English people missed the point in some very good African jokes made. That is just because very little is known of the African, and as was pointed out at the meeting by an African boy, even the very little known of the African is got from official files and "we don't live in files". Apart from this, what is found in the files is collected, in 99 cases out of a 100, by Englishmen who know very little themselves of the African and misinterpret a lot of things. You may want to ask "Why don't you Africans write about yourselves?" The answer is that very few Africans are qualified to write books in English. The very few qualified to write are faced with the heavy work of educating their own people and giving them matter to read in their own language. But I think one can get over these difficulties, if in the various departments that deal with things concerning Africa, educated Africans are trained to take part in the work of the department, they can always help where knowledge about Africans is required.

We, the Africans, at the meeting found very interesting some of the remarks made by speakers on using films to educate the African about British way of life, and to introduce African life to Britishers. I wish, if I may, to comment on only one of these remarks. Someone said that a film like *Men of Two Worlds* presented very vividly to English people the African way of life and one of the many problems of Africa. The problem in that film as far as I remember, was the fight between the old and the new—a problem not in any way peculiar to Africans. Some very great nations at one time or other in their history had to face the same problem—a particular aspect of which is the fight between witchcraft and science. In fact, it is one of our problems and I think it right to introduce it to Britishers. But to say that what was depicted in that film showed the African way of life to-day, I think, with all due respect to the speaker, is not correct.

*If I may compare, I think it is the same as saying, pictures taken from Petticoat Lane in the East End depict the British way of life.*

The film *Men of Two Worlds* aroused a lot of controversy among African students here. Some found it most trying because it helped to emphasize the "colour bar" here in London and made people, who before seeing that film, were quite indifferent to the African student next door,

almost hostile to him. Among other students, it created laughter and ridicule and others felt quite sad about the degree of ignorance displayed in that film. What actually happened was that words which were quite alien to the African were put in his mouth and he was made to behave in a manner quite foreign to him, in a scene or setting which is his own. What I mean is that the African scene or setting in that film served just as a background for the working of a purely European plot.

*The European trying to think in terms of the primitive African fails, and what he gets is anything but the way a primitive African thinks.* That is why the words put in the mouth of the African in that film were so very foreign to him. A primitive European in the old, old days might have thought along such lines, but it is hardly correct to say a primitive African thinks the same way. To say a film like *Men of Two Worlds* created a better understanding between

the two races is, I think, with all due respect to the speaker, a fallacy.

What others think Africans think, is not necessarily what we think in fact. Inviting us to help in solving our problems is, I think, a great step towards better understanding, and will make us Africans appreciate more fully the very great help English people are giving us at this stage of our development towards nationhood.

Mr. John Grierson said that man cannot live half literate and half illiterate—that there should be a campaign against illiteracy—to help men to live a richer and fuller life, and to develop their culture. Maybe if we, that is, all the World's illiterate and uncivilised peoples, are helped honestly in our development, we may bring sooner to the World what we have to contribute and, may be, help to solve some of the World's greatest problems.

## “SOUTHERN RHODESIA—IS THIS YOUR COUNTRY?”

By

BRIAN M. CONNOLLY

A FILM WITH THIS TITLE was shown a few months ago at a news cinema in London, not far from Rhodesia House in the Strand.

The audience was composed mostly of prospective immigrants to the Colony. The film showed them what they could expect to find on their arrival; showed them the towns and the countryside, the type of work done by the inhabitants, the social life, recreations and amenities, and the lives led by the natives. It also showed them what difficulties they could expect to encounter in their new environment.

The film was sponsored by the Southern Rhodesian Government, and made by Gaumont British.

Why it was made, and the story of other films made and being made in the Colony, I will attempt to tell in this article.

Southern Rhodesia today is a veritable mecca for Britons, who, dissatisfied with their lot, are casting covetous eyes overseas, eyes which so often alight on the Colony, with its very British outlook and background, its almost complete absence of shortages and difficulties imposed on people in Britain during and since the war.

But Britons are not merely casting eyes towards Rhodesia; they are packing their bags, and by air, by sea, and by the perilous overland route, are converging on this fortunate, sunny land in ever increasing numbers. Despite difficulties, mainly the housing shortage in the country, some 20,000 immigrants, of whom about half were direct from the United Kingdom, have entered the Colony since the beginning of 1946.

Anticipating this influx, and with an eye to the future, the Government in 1945 made plans for film publicity, and arranged for Gaumont British units to come to the Colony to film various aspects of life, primarily from the immigration and tourist points of view.

*Southern Rhodesia—Is This Your Country?* is the immigration film.

### TECHNICOLOR

Rhodesia has much to offer to tourists—one need only mention the Victoria Falls, the Zimbabwe Ruins and the Matopos to appreciate the country's physical attractions—and the Government fully appreciates the value of the tourist trade and the money it brings into the country.

Therefore a Technicolor film to attract tourists has also been produced, entitled *Colony in Colour*, and is due for release about May or June this year.

Among those responsible for these and other Gaumont British productions are Donald Carter, Harold Weaver, Alistair Scobie, James Swackhamer, Brian Salt and Mrs. Norah Toomey.

Carter visited the Colony in September, 1945, on the invitation of the Government to advise on the establishment of an official film unit on the lines of the British Crown Film Unit. Then came Weaver and Scobie, to look the country over and decide what could be done.

Towards the end of 1946, Gaumont British (Africa) Pty., Ltd., was formed in South Africa, with Weaver as resident director with headquarters in Johannesburg.

*Southern Rhodesia—Is This Your Country?* is in black and white, and was written and partly directed by Alistair Scobie. To make it he and his unit toured the country to put on celluloid every facet of Rhodesian life.

*Colony in Colour* was directed by James Swackhamer, a Canadian who worked on the film *True Glory*, one of the war's screen epics.

In addition to these Government-sponsored films, Gaumont British units produced educational and instructional films on such subjects as the Wankie Game Reserve (one of the largest in Africa) for the children's cinema series; mission stations; the geography of the land for

school purposes; the tobacco industry, and the life led by Rhodesian children to show British children how others live.

Two films on mission life were produced. *Shoniwa*, directed by Swackhammer, is the story of a mission-educated native who, on leaving the mission, returns to his people. In his kraal his twin brother, superstitious and backward, is an important man, and conflicts ensue between him and the educated brother. This film was shot near Umtali in the mountainous Eastern Districts, and contains some fine scenic effects. Playing the only European part, that of a missionary, was Gordon Mulholland, a South African actor.

The other film is *Pitanika*, directed by Brian Salt, and shot at Cyrene Mission, near Bulawayo. This is one of the country's most famous mission stations and was visited unexpectedly by the Queen during the Royal Tour of Rhodesia in April last year.

It tells the story of a crippled native who, after a series of adventures, enters the mission to become an artist. Cyrene has a fine reputation as a native art centre, and his life and work, based on fact, is graphically shown. This is essentially a religious film and will probably only be circulated among religious societies.

#### GOVERNMENT PRODUCTION

Southern Rhodesia has a Government Film Production Unit working with 35 mm. film to produce films for both internal and external use. In addition, a 16 mm. unit, to produce films mainly for native consumption, will be established shortly under the Central African Council, a body which co-ordinates matters common to both Southern and Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

Most of the films made by the local unit are designed to educate Rhodesians in important matters affecting their welfare and the future of their country.

Two films nearing completion by the Public Relations Department film unit are *Still Waters—the Menace of Bilharzia*, and *We Were Primitive*.

The former, as its title implies, coats the pill of warning against Africa's worst disease with the sugar of an appealing story pleasantly acted by local talent. It will be shown widely in the Colony, and also to would-be immigrants overseas. A film on the scientific aspects of the diagnosis and treatment of bilharzia is being made for research institutes and medical schools throughout the world.

*We Were Primitive* portrays the development of the native people in a native Reserve, as they apply the lessons learnt from the white man in the sphere of agriculture, building, hygiene, education, and market organisation, and will come as a revelation to Rhodesians themselves as well as to audiences overseas.

Problems of health, race relations, and the Colony's physical development, provide a host of subjects for the camera of Frank Goodliffe, Films Officer to the Public Relations Department.

In the "educational and instructional" category are films made under the auspices of the Natural Resources Board, which is a body engaged in teaching good farming methods, combating soil erosion, veld fires and the ignorance of native farmers, among other matters.

These are all 16 mm. shorts and are exhibited in halls and schools by means of portable projectors with sound equipment, and also by the mobile cinema vans of the department. These vans are a boon to farmers and others off the beaten track—and they can be well off the beaten track in Rhodesia—and their visits are eagerly awaited.

The more important of these farming films will be made available to those countries with similar problems.

All the film work I have mentioned has been done by British or Rhodesian film units, but a Swedish company recently completed yet another film on native life in missions, called *I am With You*, written by G. Stevens and R. Lindstrom. All members of the unit, including European actors, were Swedish, and one of the authors directed the film. They left Rhodesia last October on their return to Sweden to process the film, which I understand has caught the eye of an American company who might translate the dialogue into English.

So much for some of the more recent developments in film production in Southern Rhodesia, but the story starts many years ago.

#### HISTORY

In 1933 James A. Fitzpatrick, "The Voice of the Globe", visited the Colony to film the Victoria Falls, for inclusion in a travelogue on South Africa. In 1935 he returned to take outdoor shots for his production *The Life of David Livingstone*. In an interview then he remarked: "You have a marvellous climate for pictures. There has not been one hour of a day when I have not been able to take pictures. I am surprised producers have not taken fuller advantage of your climate."

It has taken over ten years for other producers to learn what Fitzpatrick discovered then!

Back in 1934 an ambitious venture was undertaken by a Gordon Cooper, who made a film on native life near Bulawayo, with native actors. The cameraman was H. O. Schultze, previously employed by the German Ufa company. What happened to this film, and whether it was ever completed or shown, I am unable to ascertain. At any rate, it must rank as one of the first productions made in the colony.

Then in 1935 came what is still the most important and widely distributed film about Rhodesia ever made—*Rhodes of Africa*. This was also a Gaumont British production, directed by Geoffrey Barkas, with Walter Huston as Cecil Rhodes.

Outdoor scenes were shot in the Matopo hills, which contain the grave of Rhodes at World's View. Here Barkas assembled hundreds of natives, European police, horses, and all the paraphenalia required for a major film. Playing the part of Lobengula, chief of the Matabele at the time when the country was occupied by Rhodes's Pioneer Column, was a nephew of the chief, Ndanisa Kumalo. He was later taken to London for interior scenes, and on his return to Rhodesia his stories of his impressions of England hit the newspaper headlines and were the wonder and envy of his followers.

So much for the past and present—what of the future?

What James A. Fitzpatrick said in 1935 has been reiterated during the past year by Gaumont British directors and cameramen. Two of the former, Swackhammer and

Scobie, both told me of the marvellous opportunities for film production in Southern Rhodesia.

Once directors and cameramen have accustomed themselves to local conditions, to the heat and bright sunshine, Rhodesia can be an ideal place for film locations.

There is a great variety of scenery within the Colony's borders. In the west, around Plumtree and Bulawayo, there is flat, somewhat arid country, which is a continuation of the Kalahari desert in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. South of Bulawayo lie the Matapos hills, with their weird rock formations and their quiet, brooding atmosphere so loved by Rhodes, whose wish was to be buried among them. Further east, in the Salisbury area, the country is greener, better watered and better wooded. Here are fine farms, tobacco, maize, fruit and vegetables.

#### LONGING EYES

Further east still are the beautiful Eastern Districts, the holiday and show place of Rhodesia, the rendezvous of Rhodesians and tourists alike. Here are impressive mountain peaks and valleys, the former rising to over 8,000 feet. Here are waterfalls thousands of feet high, sparkling trout streams, early morning mist and cold.

At Inyanga the countryside has been compared to the Scottish moors. Further south near Melsetter is more rugged country which includes the impressive, stark Chimanimani mountain range, spoken of by mountaineers as among the finest in Africa.

Throughout the country there is variety in profusion; there are progressive, well-laid out towns and communities; there are massive rivers like the Zambesi and the Sabi; there are great bridges like the Birchenough and Beit; there are networks of roads connecting all parts.

Under these conditions it is not surprising that producers are casting eyes on Southern Rhodesia as a land where outdoor films, equal to any made in the United Kingdom or United States, could well be produced.

With the exception of *Rhodes of Africa* films made in Rhodesia about Rhodesia have all had a motive outside pure entertainment—to educate, instruct, enlighten. Now, however, it seems that films made solely for entertainment purposes are on the production schedules of British companies.

#### AND SYDNEY BOX

Swackhammer, for instance, who left Rhodesia for England after completing his mission film, left London in January for Nairobi. He is manager of a Gainsborough unit which is making *Trek* for Sydney Box. He and his unit expect to spend some three months in East and South Africa, including Rhodesia, producing this film, which is to be about overland trekkers.

The adventures and hardships of these intrepid emigrants from Britain, who set out in lorries and caravans, often ill-equipped, to cross the Sahara and travel down Africa to Rhodesia or the Union, will make exciting and topical screen material. It is to be hoped that films of this nature, and others recalling the colourful history of southern Africa, will occupy the minds of producers in the future. At the moment British companies lead the field in film production in Africa. May they make the most of their opportunities.

## A NOTE ON SINGAPORE AND MALAYA

By

R. B. YOUNG

IN SINGAPORE THE USE of the film as a means of instruction is fairly widely recognised mainly by the Government Public Relations Department. This organisation, though greatly handicapped by the lack of equipment and suitable film stock, has made good progress in its endeavour to bring information and instruction to the very doors of the many different inhabitants. Using a mobile cinema van equipped with 16 mm. sound projectors, the Department gives shows free of charge in the open air, in schools, churches, convents, welfare institutions, and in some of the remote villages on the island. The shows proved to be very popular and are well attended by the different races including Chinese, Malays, Indians and others. Although the majority of the films have commentaries in English this has been by no means a drawback and where possible an announcer accompanies the mobile units and interprets the films while they are exhibited. The Department, however, hope to procure films recorded in the local vernaculars shortly. The films already obtained include several health cartoons produced by Walt Disney entitled *Infant Care*, *The Human Body*, *What is Disease*, *Transmission of Diseases*, etc., and these were exceptionally popular. Among other titles are *Burma Victory*, *It Began on the Clyde* as well as several British, Australian and Indian newsreels and one or two road safety films. Some films have been shown successfully in schools and the Department is experimenting further in this direction.

Children's matinees are held on Saturday mornings in one or two of the public cinemas but the films shown are not really suitable for Children's programmes. The films are mainly adult features and comedies and with the exception of road safety films nothing of an educational nature has been shown. Probably the difficulty in obtaining suitable films accounts for this.

No films have been produced commercially in Singapore but a unit in Kuala Lumpur (Malaya) has recently finished a short instructional film on the "Grow More Food" campaign.

Recently arrangements have been made to form a film society in Malaya, the objects of the society being:

To afford members opportunities of seeing and discussing English, Indian and Chinese films which may not be distributed through the usual public cinema circuits;

To stimulate public interest in the art of film production and in the appreciation of films;

To encourage the study of films as an art and as an instrument of educational and social progress;

To promote interest in the production of films in Malaya;

To provide opportunities for comparison of the film art as exemplified by the film productions of all countries.

A small committee has been set up and they anticipate making a start in Kuala Lumpur.



# HAMLET

*by*

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE





*Produced and directed in its  
film form by Laurence Olivier  
for Two Cities Films of the  
J. Arthur Rank Organisation*



## AS OTHERS SEE US

By CATHERINE DUNCAN, who wrote and directed the first three films made for the Department of Immigration by the Australian National Film Board. The illustrations are by Peter Probyn

SOMETIMES, AFTER SEEING a programme of documentary films produced by the Australian National Film Board, I have been tempted to make yet another film under the title of *As Others See Us*. The commentary for the opening sequence would run something like this:—

“Australia is a country of vast open spaces and the Barrier Reef,  
It produces wool, dried fruits and mutton, butter and  
bully beef;  
It is inhabited by sheep, koala bears, thoroughbreds  
of the turf,  
Lyre-birds, platypus, aborigines and sun-gods of the  
surf.  
The sun always shines, the flowers always bloom,  
the speech is perfectly free,

For the tourist, perhaps, this optimistic picture does less than justice to a country which is one of the most beautiful and fortunate in the world to-day. The tourist has time to enjoy the vast, open spaces; he has money to spend; and so long as he doesn't expect the hotels to stay open after six o'clock or a flourishing theatre which will entertain him on Sundays, Australia will probably live up to his highest expectations.

### PROMISES—AND WARNINGS

But what about the immigrant? He has to live with us. Right from the start he has to face the practical problems of every-day living. How does he see us? What does he hope to find, and what warnings or promises should he receive before setting out?

These were some of the questions which confronted me when I was placed in charge of the first three films to be made by the Australian National Film Board for the Department of Immigration. As an enthusiast both for immigration and for films as one of the best mediums to inform immigrants of their future, I tackled the job with an ignorant and blissful fervour. I found it difficult to understand the reaction of many Australians who remarked cynically: “Films for immigrants? The same old propaganda, I suppose. Come in sucker”! I protested firmly that these films would be different. We were going to tell the truth!

I began then by reading hundreds of letters from prospective immigrants, noting down their questions as to living conditions and the reasons why they wanted to come to Australia. I suppose the British Education Department has brought its Australian history up to date, but one might suppose from many of these letters that we were still living in the good old days of Ned Kelly. Mothers wanted to know whether they should bring the children's warm coats and whether they could buy sewing machines and china in Australia. Fathers asked if there were schools, banking facilities, trade unions and hospitals? Farmers talked of buying a small farm. Or, perhaps, our past information had done its work too well. At least, nobody doubted that we had plenty to eat and that the sun always shone.

Before this staggering lack of knowledge, it was difficult to know where to start and there were many conferences with the Department of Immigration before the final programme was approved. It was decided that the first films should be directed toward immigrants most urgently needed—the industrial workers—and that they should contain practical information on living and working conditions.



“The Camera liked places where it had room to move and where interesting action was to be found . . .”

The beer is beaut, though the pubs close up in time to get home for tea.  
And film-makers at least, believe their place of birth  
Is the finest b——y continent on earth”.

It would have been an amusing experiment, especially if this familiar commentary had been matched with images more closely conforming to reality—overcrowding in the cities and lack of suitable accommodation for thousands of families; soil erosion helped along by the sheep; strikes; shortage of man-power and, of course, Melbourne rain. For like all countries, we have our problems, too, in Australia, problems which are seldom allowed to enter the film's garden of Eden.

Because of the lack of housing, preference was given to single workers who could stay with friends or be accommodated in hostels—the single man who would find a job in one of our “developing secondary industries”; the single girl who would work in a provincial city as a weaver, a nurse, a typist or shop assistant. The third film was on family life, contrasting conditions and traditions of a “Christmas Under the Sun”.

With this programme as a guide, I went forth with a cameraman to seek the Truth.

#### “STRAIGHT” REPORTING

The first film seemed relatively simple. We had chosen as our single man a young British seaman who had taken his discharge in Australia and found a job in a dehydrating and quick-freezing factory. We wanted to say something about wages and conditions of work, the attitude of trade unions towards immigrants, the kind of board to be had, and some of the ways in which he spent his leisure. A straight case of reporting, it appeared. And so it might have turned out had we been content to report on this individual case. But our information had to apply generally, and it was not long before we discovered that the rare bird of truth was as difficult to find outside as inside the camera.

This tedious instrument to begin with was selective. For it, the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, didn't exist. By the very things it left unsaid it turned out to be the biggest liar of us all. It preferred, of course, to perpetuate the myth of Australia's eternal sunshine, staying inside on the many wet, cold days of winter. It liked places where it had room to move and where interesting action was to be found. It had a weakness for attractive people and decorative exteriors, making the excuse that drab realities stripped of their human context often seemed worse than they actually were.

But if physical facts were obstreperous, verbal information proved even more unmanageable. There was hardly a general statement that didn't need footnotes. The attitude of the trade unions was sympathetic toward immigrants but . . . and then followed all the qualifications, the special cases, and the differences between the various unions. The same applied to rehabilitation benefits open to British ex-servicemen. Even the basic wage differed between the states, and changed to meet the rising cost of living just after the dialogue was recorded. We began to feel if our information was to be up to date the films would remain permanently in the laboratories.

Somehow a mean had to be found, a compromise between the worst and the best, the lowest and the higher levels, the present and the future; although there were many times when we felt this half-truth was the worst misrepresentation of all.

Nor did Australians themselves help matters. They had begun by raising the old objection that our “propaganda would crack up the country”. The unfortunate immigrant, they were sure, would be as disillusioned as many of his predecessors. But when it came to the actual shooting, they were the ones who did the “cracking up”. Although we explained that we wanted to film them just as they were at home, when we arrived on the day of shooting, the house and family were frequently arrayed in their Sunday best. The excuse was always the same: “We couldn't let them see it like that in the old country”.

There were so many jokes about Andy's overgrown hedge that he finally rounded up a working bee of the neighbour's children to cut it for him. But we got our own back on that occasion, by filming them in the act. And there were the private words of advice on our choice of locations—the best garden, the most modern house, the exceptionally gifted youngster. They were always disappointed when we chose something less than the best, for when it came to the outside world, these Australians, many of them immigrants themselves, took a tremendous collective pride in their country.

Perhaps it was their attitude which made me reconsider the whole approach toward our programme of information. Were a selection of changing, and often misleading, facts really what immigrants wanted? Wasn't it more important to tell them something about our spiritual climate—the free and easy friendliness of Australians, the possibilities in a country where everything is just starting and so many things have to be built from scratch? If immigrants simply hoped to change a hard life for an easy one by coming to Australia, they were in for a disappointment. If their happiness depended on pictures on Sunday or an evening in the pub, they should stay at home. But it seemed to me that those immigrants, who were prepared to pull up their roots and come to a country where there might not be even sewing machines or schools for their children, had a faith



“The rough poetry and comradeship of men round a camp fire . . . ”

and enthusiasm which should be matched by something more than mere facts.

I was more than ever convinced of this during a week spent in Nuriootpa, a small town in South Australia. The people told me they had received hundreds of letters from British immigrants asking if they could come out and settle there. Why? Why Nuriootpa in particular? There's nothing remarkable about the town itself—the usual country town with its main road and straggle of shops and houses. The district's population is predominantly German, descendants of political and religious refugees who came to Australia last century. The first settlers lived in hollow trees or rough stone shelters no bigger than an oven.

They worked hard and, in time, they turned the green Barossa Valley into a place of vineyards, orchards of pears and plums, peaches and cherry blossom. They dried apricots in the sun, ran a few sheep and cattle, planted crops, churned butter and made the good, red wine of South Australia. But their lives were separated, dug back into the earth, and many of their children began drifting toward the cities. The people of Nuriootpa began asking themselves what could be done about it.

What they've done and are doing is the reason why this little country town is a promised land not only to immigrants but to many Australians. These people have faith in themselves as a community. They discovered that by working together they could achieve seemingly impossible things. They could own, build and run a hotel. They could make a swimming pool and sports ground. They could establish a Technical School for adult education, libraries, a kindergarten. They could draw up the blue prints and put down the foundations of a community centre that embraces practically the whole township. These people haven't passed the buck of their future to government, councils or anybody beyond themselves. If something needs doing, they do it.

And I am certain it is this pioneer spirit which appeals to many prospective immigrants. They are prepared to make sacrifices and put up with hardships so long as they feel they are building a richer and happier future. To-day, the faith has gone out of governments and somehow we have to rediscover it in ourselves. And to me a vision of possibilities seems the better propaganda because it attracts the kind of immigrant Australia most needs . . . tough citizens, as hardy pioneers as ever crossed the inland deserts from Adelaide to Darwin. Independent people, who won't expect anything more than space and opportunity for their energies. It needs some of the passion and persistence that cut the first farms out of virgin bush. It needs some of the rough poetry and comradeship of men round a camp-fire.

Yet my ideas on what kind of films should be made for immigrants must necessarily be based on supposition until the problem is tackled scientifically. The film maker should have at his disposal a body of research which could tell him more exactly what immigrants want to know; the type of person who wants to immigrate, his social and economic standards; the reactions of audiences to the first humble and tentative films, and the reactions of the same people after six months in their new surroundings.

It is a job for trained psychologists in both England and Australia, and their findings would be of tremendous importance not only to film makers. Without such a survey, the whole policy of information must remain, at the best, haphazard.

There is also another side of the question which must be considered, and one which has not been overlooked by the Department of Immigration. If immigrants need information on Australia, Australians are equally in need of information on the whole policy of immigration. Half its success depends on the attitude of the ordinary Australian toward his new neighbour and, at the moment, I should say it was lukewarm. Here, again, one requires the more exact research of the psychologist. But judging by the people I talked to during the making of our films, Australians accept the idea of large-scale immigration

in theory and resent it in practice. There is still the economic fear that the newcomers will take their jobs and lower their hard-won standards of living. The Englishman is always a "Pommy" and the European a "refugee", terms either affectionate or contemptuous, depending on the person in question. This distinction is important, for I have met too many immigrants who came to Australia after the last war and found friends and work and happiness in their new home to believe that this resentment is anything but superficial, and can't be overcome by personal contact. But small though our population is, immigrants can't make personal contact with every Australian, and the general attitude will remain unless it is informed and altered.

We, like Englishmen, are suspicious of organised public information. To us it smacks too much of propaganda, an instrument of destruction as it became in Germany. Yet the quality of this weapon lies in the hand that controls it, and its strength can be used for constructive as well as destructive ends. In a world which is changing as rapidly as ours there is a constant need to revise outworn ideas and philosophies and to promote new understandings. To let others see us as we really are, and to see others in their true relationship to ourselves, is one of the main tasks of an information service organised on a national and international scale—a service in which films can play a major part.

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*Continuation from page 15.*

*Incident?* However, how general the practice is in the United States, and the precise reasons, outside specific instances, that have caused it to be adopted, have neither significance nor importance.

It is, at best, an expedient, and not a new one. Mr. Blakeston's individual view as to its possible use is the postulation of a bad principle, which, fortunately, is unlikely to find favour with either the aesthete or the economist.

It is a pity that Mr. Blakeston didn't go a step further and provide one or two examples of how this faculty could be employed as a genuine kinematic concept. In *The Return of Bulldog Drummond*, Ralph Richardson, as Drummond, wants to put Carl Peterson off the scent by pretending to be still in London, when, in fact, he is hard on the heels of the wily Carl in the Fen district. To this end he co-opts a music-hall impersonator as a telephonic double. In less time than could have been humanly possible, the pair are in lively conversation in identically the same tones. Of course, I used Richardson's voice in both instances. That was twelve years ago.

This article is not the storm in a tea cup it may, at first glance, seem to be. The number of periodicals dealing with film are steadily increasing and, I take it, provide a profitable writers' market. Much harm can be done by the postulation of idiosyncratic and empirical theories and quasi-precepts, the essence of which has not been distilled from proven practice and experienced contemplation. The writer should always remember that someone may take him seriously and the knowing use of such phrases as "Of course, post-synchronization is" (or "is not") or the more cunning "Not everybody knows that . . .", should stringently be avoided as a means of implying authenticity to what is no more than a speculative idea.

# NO! MR. BLAKESTON

By

WALTER SUMMERS

MR. OSWALD BLAKESTON propounds a near heresy<sup>1</sup> valid only as a commercially necessary expedient, and a stop-gap method of overcoming the confusion following the erection of that new Tower of Babel of which Messrs. Warner Brothers, Inc., had the honour of laying the foundation stone.

If this were all Mr. Blakeston advocates, apart from being several years behind events, his article might not merit censure.

It is not easy to discern precisely, not so much *what* it is he so lightly recommends, as the material or æsthetic benefits he believes will follow from its adoption. In his article "Synthetic Stars" we are informed that the dialogue of "eighty-five per cent. of the product of some of the major studios in Hollywood" is re-recorded remotely as a "measure of economy". But whether he thinks it is an example of American progression, which we could follow to our profit, is anything but clear. Mr. Blakeston himself adds to the confusion of thought by first declaring that "the artistes find they have no difficulty in recapturing the tempo and mood of the dialogue", but a little later on states "On the other hand, the time-lag between the actual performance and the re-recording of the dialogue seems to me to give a phoney ring to the idea. . . ."

Mr. Blakeston, with some justification, will immediately accuse me of arbitrarily lopping his sentence in two in order to make my point. Of the act of lopping I stand convicted, but not of the intent, for, try as I will, I cannot read sense into the whole. He says that the time-lag seems to him to give a phoney ring . . . then, or so it seems to me, he changes his thought in mid-sentence and makes the "idea" to which has been given "a phoney ring" the conviction that it is essential to have direct sound recording! Nor does the preceding sentence do more than add confusion on confusion. I recommend the reader to look the article up and see if he can read more sense into it than I can. If, at the moment of writing it, Mr. Blakeston intended what, as I read it, he wrote, which is that the time-lag between performance and re-recording seems to give a "phoney" ring, otherwise, an insincerity, to the dialogue, I'm with him all along the line. If he will take a look at the sound-tracks of succeeding "takes" of a scene, he will at once be struck by their utter dissimilarity in appearance, even though each "take" followed hot on the heels of its antecedents. There are few Directors who, at one time or another, have not resigned themselves to post-synchronizing one or more sentences which for some reason cannot be satisfactorily mastered on the floor. Sometimes it may be a scream which cannot be registered at full pitch with the "mike" in position for a mid or a long shot. Or it may be a character has to converse momentarily in a foreign tongue which is beyond the artist's capacity. These are matters where it is commonsense to insist that art and economy choose "the middle path". But, dubbing for export aside, if Mr. Blakeston is advocating anything specific at all, it is

that, in cases where it is thought to be desirable, the visual image of an artist shall be imbued with a synthetic personality by grafting on to it a new and different voice.

If it is this that Mr. Blakeston is advocating, then I say, with complete and utter conviction, that he is propounding a retrogressive and vicious principle, which, except as an expedient where there is no known alternative, serves no æsthetic or economic purpose.

Modern realistic film no longer seeks the histrionic tonality of the theatre any more than it clings to the hoary concept of the "photogenic face". Stars, and ability aside, the primary consideration is personality, that is the suitability of the actor's own personality in relation to the personality of the character to be incarnated. And there is another yet more cogent reason against the introduction of such a practice. We want no more synthetics lest we harden for all time into a synthetic art, which is not art at all. We already suffer from a plethora of contrived, synthetic plots peopled by characters whose behaviourism is conditioned by a psychology exclusive to the film factories. We are treated to synthetic sunsets, to colouration which contradicts both art and nature. Now we are invited to add to this Nihilistic advocacy of "the unexamined life" which, two thousand odd years ago, Socrates declared not to be "worth the living", the latest laboratory novelty, the synthesized human personality!

Fortunately, there are material as well as æsthetic objections to this rash suggestion. I will name only one, but a major one. Cost!

Despite what Mr. Blakeston has to say on the saving of "an enormous amount of time", which is money, I am going to suggest that, applying the method to England, what you would gain on the swings you would lose on the roundabouts. The biggest item of expenditure in film production, apart from "overheads", is artists' salaries, now, since film became dependent on the actor as an artist in the spoken word, sky-rocketed above an economic level.

To compensate for their retention for a further four or six weeks for the purpose of post-synchronization, the time-saving on the floor would have to be, not enormous, but colossal. On the other hand, if the voices of other artists are to be dubbed on the visual film, *they*, even assuming they can be found outside the ranks of those who are already leading players in their own right, will rapidly acquire equal importance, and command a not dissimilar scale of remuneration, while it is not impossible to foresee the development of a "star" voice and even the possibility in a two-picture programme of being confronted with the anomaly of two "visual" stars enunciating through the same mouthpiece.

Frankly, and in deference to Mr. Blakeston's known perspicacity, I suggest that his journalistic flair overcame his normal aptitude for considered writing. That, having acquired his tit-bit of information he evolved his synthetic postulate as a "feed" for it. While his information may have been garnered at first hand, the naïvete behind his remark "that for some curious reason" the shadow of the suspended "mike" invariably intrudes into the eye of the lens, suggests him more as the privileged spectator "on the outside, looking in".

Post-synchronizing is generally practised in England as well as in America. Have not the latter recently "sweetened to taste" the voice of our own Mr. Wilding in *Piccadilly*

<sup>1</sup> "Synthetic Stars". SIGHT AND SOUND. No. 64.

*Continued on previous page.*



*Kanojo no Hatsugen*

Shot in the Gardens at Kamakura

## THE JAPANESE CINEMA TO-DAY

By

R. R. CUNNINGHAME

*Reprinted by courtesy of the Bulletin of the Wellington Film Institute*

DEFEAT HAS HAD ITS EFFECT on the Japanese cinema as on other aspects of Japanese life. Before the war, the industry was steadily expanding, and Japanese films flowed out in increasing numbers to Manchuria, China and other countries of the great East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. I remember seeing in Brisbane in 1944 one of these films which had fallen into Allied hands, a tedious feudal drama of the sort so popular in Japan during this period. By that time the motion picture industry was under strict Government control with the Eiga Kosha established as the only distributor of motion pictures in Japan, and the Nippon Newsreel Company as the only newsreel company.

By the end of the war, the film industry showed signs of exhaustion and conditions of material shortage persist to-day. Japanese film reviews make frequent reference to the difficulties with which Japanese film companies have to contend, the lack of materials and costumes, the shortage of electric power, labour disputes and the rising cost of production. Yet there is no doubt that commercially the film companies are thriving in spite of the disordered economy. The three largest film companies continue to pay 5 per cent. dividends, and (since theatre admission prices have not risen as much as general prices) cinemas continue to be crowded. Here is the ideal form of investment for the

"new yen" capitalist. We find, in fact, that the number of Japanese moving picture theatres, which at the end of the war was down to under half the 1942 level, has now almost regained that level.

#### WESTERN TRENDS

What of the character of the films now being produced? As early as July, 1945, elements in the established picture companies, no doubt aware of Japan's impending defeat, rebelled against the production of propaganda films and began preparation of Western type scenarios in anticipation of peace. After the surrender this trend was encouraged and, in fact, required by MacArthur's Headquarters. Among the historical directives issued to the Japanese Government in the first months of the occupation, when liberalising influences were predominant, was the one requiring the suspension of restrictions on free speech in motion pictures, and directing the repeal of local censorship laws which gave to the police wide powers, not only to censor films, but also to investigate the behaviour of employees, to decide who should work in the industry and even to prevent actors from walking in the street in stage costume. "Bureaucratic" controls have now been terminated and supervision is in the hands of MacArthur's Headquarters in conjunction with the recently-formed autonomous Japan Motion Picture Association.

A more important step still was the directive of November 16th, 1945, ordering the Japanese Government to prevent the sale, exchange or exhibition of films used to propagate "nationalistic, militaristic or feudal concepts". Those films were specifically condemned which stressed the creation of the warrior spirit, the uniqueness of the Japanese race, the special role of Japan in Asia and conformity to a feudal code with its contempt of the individual. This directive thus covered not only specific war propaganda, such as *Aiki Minamie Tōbu* (Planes Flying to the South), or *Doi Goretsu no Kyōfu* (Horror of the Fifth Columnist), but also films which exalted bushido such as *Rokyoku Chūshin Gura* (47 Ronin), the notoriously popular Japanese feudal story of revenge.

As a positive measure, MacArthur's Headquarters provided the Japanese Motion Picture Industry with a guide instructing film producers to encourage liberal tendencies in Japan, including the basic freedoms.

As would be expected, the results of this re-orientation have not been spectacular, at least, artistically. The Japanese cinema appears to be incorrigibly didactic, though now it is the liberals who triumph in the face of such monsters as the zaibatsu, feudalistic parents and tyrannical employers—normally (says a European critic) at the expense of art. The scene may be modern as in *Yesterday, To-day and To-morrow*, which depicts the post-war adventures of two veterans who expose a ring of black marketeers, or (since Japanese enjoy historical settings) it may be taken from the past, as in the case of *Kunisada Chuji*, in which a gambling boss reforms and supports the cause of the peasants against the lord who enslaved them. Even mysteries, however, appear to have the topical touch: thus *Phosphorescent Face* successfully frustrates a muni-

tions maker who seeks to evade the after-war excess profits tax.

The campaign for democratic sentiments is supported by current documentaries such as the *Japanese Tragedy*, which traces the economic and political steps which led Japan to embark on aggression and points out the leaders responsible, or *The Face of Democratic Japan*, dealing with post-war democratisation measures. The content of newsreels has changed correspondingly. It is perhaps of some interest that when in August, 1946, the Japanese newsreel carried out a national survey at the request of the Imperial Household Ministry to determine the public reaction to a recent news film containing close-up shots of the Emperor, 65.5 per cent. of those polled approved the film, as against 17.2 per cent. who actually disapproved it.

Whilst so many of the films being produced are "democratisation" propaganda, there are, of course, other films of a purely conventional character. Among romantic films the Japanese filmgoer can choose, according to temperament, *Bride of the Convent* (the demobilised soldier returns to find his girl has entered a convent), or *Returned Lover* (the faithful girl friend is re-united with her lover on his return from the war). He may admire the struggles, in the face of public apathy, of Dr. Shibusaburo Kitazato, a pioneer in bacteriological research (*The Herald of Humanity*) or, in a film with a promising title *Your Hands, My Dear Damsel*, follow a country doctor in his health efforts. The young Japanese, whose interests Japanese critics say have been neglected in the past, may regale himself with *Circus* or the cartoon fable *Fox and Eggs*.

#### MUSICALS

There have also been produced a number of light comedies, some with musical items. One of these comedies, *Lord for a Night*, satirises the machinations of the new rich in the early Meiji period. Another, which has received favourable comment from European observers and which is the first film since the surrender to have been exported to Japanese audiences in the United States and Hawaii, is the Toho Motion Picture Company's *Tokio Gonin Otoko* ("Five Guys from Tokio"), which with a light touch ridicules pomposity, exposes veniality and portrays the Japanese meeting the difficult post-war conditions with the best of good humour.

I was interested to see recently that the Shochiku Company has selected as one of the films shortly to be sent to the United States *Kanojo no Hatsugen* ("She Speaks"). I saw a short sequence taken for this film in Kamakura on Christmas Day, 1945. The previous month I had attended in Kyoto a performance of a play by the playwright Ozawa, called *Yume Miru Nakama* ("The Group who Dream"), a melodramatic play with a post-war setting in the Ueno district of Tokio, where the waifs and strays congregated. I never entirely understood the plot but it centred about the conflict between two rival bands, between the forces of evil represented by the war criminal Orihara and the forces of good represented by Georgi, a young socialist who had been in solitary confinement for fifteen years. The heroine, Tomu (she was disguised as a man up till

the end of the play), was played by the famous Japanese actress Mizunoe Takiko (usually known as Taki). It was on her invitation that I subsequently saw the sequence at Kamakura. Taki, now more aged than she appears in the photo in Amar Lahiri's *Japanese Modernism*, is still an extremely attractive and graceful woman. Her voice has a curious husky quality and she frequently takes men's parts (she has played *Hamlet*). In the scene I saw from *Kanojo no Hatsugen*, which was taken in the picturesque gardens of the most delightful Japanese style in Kamakura, she plays the part of the young wife disappointed in her plans for a picnic in the country, and venting her displeasure on her husband as they picnic in their back garden. The setting was idyllic, though the equipment used for filming the scene was very primitive. I felt no sympathy for the husband, so perhaps that may be taken as a tribute to her acting.

"Taki" was a well-known actress before the war. Japanese film reviews are somewhat critical that present-day stars should be those who date back to pre-war days and blame the vested interests of the established companies. They also find fault that the gap created by the withdrawal of the forbidden films is largely being filled, not by new films, but by the issue of old films re-edited. The three leading film companies (Toho, Shochiku and Daiei), they say, average only two new productions a month. Yet my own impression was that the amount of time being given to the filming of *Kanojo no Hatsugen* was less than that necessary for the creation of a really artistic product.

The Japanese consider it rather disgusting to kiss in public and before the American liberation kissing and clinches were tabu on the screen. New conditions now

obtain, but defenders of the old ways have not entirely ceased their vigilance. In May, 1946, a group of actors and actresses threatened to strike if the number of kissing scenes in current productions were not reduced, and the All-Japan Motion Picture Artists' Conference held in July this year also concerned itself with the elimination of erotic films.

The Japanese are keen film fans, but Japanese critics do not have many kind words for the quality of present-day Japanese films. When due allowance is made for the customary tone of self-abasement, the criticisms seem to be justified. The Japanese, always fond of American films, now have the opportunity of seeing films such as *The Gold Rush* (provided with a Japanese sound track), *Madam Curie* or *Watch on the Rhine* (captioned in Japanese), and a number of American documentaries. According to a survey of public opinion made some time back by the Student Motion Picture League, of over 3,500 replies to the question on preference for Japanese or American films, the majority indicated decisive preference for American films. Yet, in view of the artistic traditions of the country, it would probably be wrong to predict that nothing worth while will ever come out of Japan, though there is perhaps a grain of truth in the comments of the novelist Yojiro Ishizaka. "The prevailing conditions in Japanese filmdom", he says, "must be attributed to human feelings and customs, rather than to problems and shortages in materials and techniques. Granting that a Japanese company had available all the materials and skill of America, and that it should produce a film with a background of traditional human feeling and customs of Japan, it never could bring so optimistic and jovial an impression as would an American film".

## THE LANGUAGE OF THE SCREEN

By

WILLIAM SERIL

INDULGENT FILM CRITICISM shapes an undeviating apology for the structural weaknesses in motion pictures adapted from literary and stage sources. It insists that the nuances of reason and emotion cannot be expressed without the written or spoken word. Concurred judgment further asserts that unless there is prolonged use of dialogue or verbal asides (which, by their very nature, impair cinematic composition), the screen is unable to depict attitudes, ideas, intellectual reflections and psychological mechanisms. Too often we have heard the reviewer declare, "It is impossible to photograph things of the mind."

Yet, in the transcribing of books and plays, film artistry has abundantly shown that it can visualize mental and spiritual concepts in a mode distinctly idiomatic to the medium, without recourse to wordage. Cinematic flair for the externalization of feeling and imagination is probably older than Edwin S. Porter's *Dream of A Rarebit Fiend*, made in 1906; but it is appropriate that examples be drawn from the modern sound film to illustrate thought patterns and perceptions cogently embodied in graphic film imagery unaccompanied by oral utterance. Discernment of the adroitness with which screen craftsmen move

freely within these self-imposed limits may spur the formulation of more clearly defined critical film standards.

Dramatic fluency, emanating solely from the skilful positioning of the camera, is signally exemplified in the contrast between the two following widely dissimilar ranges of camera placement.

*Overhead long-shot* techniques have served to suggest moods of humiliation (*Brief Encounter*), aloneness (*Peter Ibbetson*), self-pity (*Babes In Arms*), disillusionment (*Shadow of a Doubt*), and even animal fright (*Hangover Square*).

*Severe facial close-up* contrivances, wherein the performer seemingly walks directly into the camera lens, have been employed to intimate the sensations of grim determination (*Citizen Kane*), smug self-satisfaction (*The Magnificent Ambersons*), calculating female cunning (*They Drive By Night*), despicable acquiescence (*48 Hours*) and mental madness (*Rebecca*). These were all in exposition of furtive frames of mind, basic to individual story development.

A characteristic close-up manœuvre is occasionally utilized to introduce suggestions of individual habit, temperament and inclination. It allows the camera to

travel slowly over an area, segregating representative objects that will add up to an indication of the personality of their possessor. In *Grand Illusion* the ambulatory camera wandered through the aesthetically appointed living quarters of the aristocratic German officer in charge of a Prisoner-Of-War Camp. *Till The End Of Time* permitted the spectator a minute inspection of the bedroom of a youthful, newly discharged Marine, therewith underscoring the strangeness he felt, seeing his home again after three years overseas. Then there was the apartment detail in *Vacation From Marriage*.

Often, a concentrated view of a particular object or group is effective in implying personal trait and behaviour. For a moment, in *Humoresque*, the camera gave its absorbed attention in this fashion to the paraphernalia on a musician's night table.

With its singular ability to search out, select and isolate individual images, the screen has regularly stressed a broad scope within which it can visually depict sentience and mental association. A sequence in *The Grapes Of Wrath* projected Ma Joad's dispirited recollection of past events by means of artful pictorial close-up. She was seen sorting a boxful of half forgotten mementos which, one after another, the camera perused with her.

In *The Eternal Mask*, a crazed man's image, reflected in the water, beckoned him, on the bridge above, to jump.

A sense of the physical intimacy and mutual sexual attraction portrayed by lovers on the screen is often rendered more emotionally intense by the resourceful application of photographic close-up. Exceptional instances of this full blown bodily magnetism occur in *Love Affair*, *Vivacious Lady*, *Stormy Waters*, *Black Narcissus*, *Notorious* and *Tom, Dick and Harry*.

Cinematic expediency is confined within extremely exacting prohibitions in the presentation of sexual frames of reference. Yet these very restrictions have prompted the creative interpolation of visual analogy, which can insinuate the events that are forbidden to be shown, e.g., a rainstorm interfused with the sensual drive of clandestine lovers, subsiding concurrently (*The Human Beast*); a connecting bedroom doorway depicting desire, and a boy-girl weathervane clock, fulfilment (*The Awful Truth*); prelude to sexual embrace, followed by a montage paralleling fertilization and growth in plant and animal life (*Harvest*, *The Devil and Daniel Webster*).

Image distortion is sometimes utilized for the visualization of actor response, sensation and behaviour. Aided by the development of lens and laboratory techniques, the motion picture is capable of displaying, astigmatically, a variety of excitations and agitations. Optically indistinct aspects can impart forcible screen impressions: drunkenness (*Crossfire*), obsessive craving for a drink (*The Lost Weekend*), frenzy (*Hangover Square*), fever (*Great Expectations*), impending blindness (*City For Conquest*), physical consciousness regained (*The Lady Vanishes*), exhaustion (*In Which We Serve*) and coma (*The Life and Loves of Beethoven*). In the Technicolor film *Black Narcissus* a tense, overwrought woman reaches bewildered giddiness, literally seeing "red" before she passes out.

Dream interludes, whether psychologically dramatic (*The Eternal Mask*) or whimsically humorous (*Tom, Dick and Harry*) are enhanced by obliquity of vision and transparent superimposition. Infrequently, distortion is introduced merely in transition from the outer world to the inner (*Peter Ibbetson*).

Filter and lens ingenuity in *The Devil and Daniel Webster* lent an other-worldly visage to the spectre-like judge and jury resurrected from the dead. For *Blind Alley*, the flashbacks describing the fantasies symptomatic of a gangster's neurotic disorder and the pictorial enactment of its origin were printed on reverse celluloid negative, to amplify introspection. *Thunder Rock* used extreme foreshortening, exaggerated body movement and missshapen gesticulation to imply the protagonist's imperfect imagining of the deportment of people confusedly conceived in his mind. Several notable examples of double exposures, overlaps and dissolves, expressing thought and response, are contained in *The Informer*.

Circumstantial resemblance and distinction offer another basis for graphic film treatment. At times, the juxtaposition of two ordinarily unrelated sights can produce a surprising dramatic impact. In apposition, one shot becomes an acute commentary on the other. Objective interjections have assimilated such things as the face and sound of a farm animal with his master's (*Storm In A Teacup*), crowded human beings with herded cattle (*Modern Times*), a procession of women with waddling geese (*Carnival In Flanders*) and the tide of pre-Nazi propaganda with a rising ocean wave (*Confessions of a Nazi Spy*). Railroad tracks and trains were used symbolically in *The Human Beast*, *Vacation From Marriage* and *Brief Encounter* (as were rushing water and breaking ice jams in *Mother* and other early Soviet works).

*Contrast*, as a narrative device, has been effectively fitted into documentary and social film continuity. In *Passport To Nowhere* the happy faces of D.P. babies are matched with the weary, disillusioned countenances of adult D.P.'s. *The City* and *When We Build Again* cross-cuttingly compare the results of community planned construction with the eyesore of existing slum condition, therein giving emphasis to Joyce's "ineluctable modality of the visual".

The blending of sight and wordless sound has been readily adapted by the film creator to convey impressions of reminiscence, reaction and tendency. Consider, for example, the airplane junkyard episode in *The Best Years of Our Lives* or the applause heard by the aged actors in *End of a Day*.

*H.M.Pulham, Esq.*, envisioned precise, personal adherence to routine in a series of rhythmic pictorial patterns accompanied by an imaginative musical cadence. Before a word was spoken, the camera had already offered an insight about the nature of his social individuality and settled disposition.

A gay, spirited tune whistled anonymously on the sound track of *The Devil and Daniel Webster* betokened the springtime lightheartedness of a farmer, riding to town. But the flat, strained whistling of a Grieg theme, in *M*, augured of sexually perverted violence.

While skilfully written dialogue must not be depreciated as an essential component of complete photoplay structure, the film's rich vein of metaphor and idea association has been too often undervalued. However regrettable it may be that the cinema derives so much of its content from other media, the form and language of expression can still be uniquely its own.

The memorabilia of screen history remain those films which stopped talking long enough to become motion pictures.



*My Hands are Clay*

*Dublin Films*

## A HISTORY OF IRISH PRODUCTION

*By*

JOHN GERRARD

BEFORE WORLD WAR I gave Hollywood the opportunity of establishing a virtual monopoly of the international market Irish production had been steadily developing in much the same manner as in the other countries of Europe.

At first the "Living Pictures" had been regarded as little more than a treat for children, but adult patronage grew as the travelling showmen began to present educational subjects and noteworthy events. Films of local interest were chiefly in demand and production units commenced operations, using Dublin as headquarters. They chose such topics as *The Dublin Horse Show*, *Irish Boat Regattas*, *Gordon Bennett's Motor Race in County Kildare* and *The Re-opening of Armagh Cathedral*.

Eventually the increasing supply of feature films from America and Britain justified the establishment of per-

manent cinemas and resulted in the organising of a regular newsreel entitled *Irish Events*, produced entirely by a native enterprise. In its comparatively short career the unit established a reputation for smart efficiency; films taken in the afternoon were, if necessary, rushed up to Dublin to be prepared for screening on the same night.

Rather a tragedy is the fact that there was no Film Institute at that time to ensure the careful preservation of negatives which might prove of historical interest. Of particular value would have been the visual record of Padraig Pearse delivering his inspiring oration at the grave of the veteran patriot, O'Donovan Rossa, regarded by many as the beginning of the national resurgence which led to the Rising of Easter, 1916, and after a time the establishment of the Irish Free State. Unfortunately, the newsreel has perished like the rest.



Dublin at that period had three independent laboratories for the processing of films, a marked contrast to modern times when the mere rumour of one being established caused a succession of headlines in the daily papers. The facilities should have been a great encouragement to producers, but yet the trend, apart from slap-stick comedies, was mainly towards "safe" factual subjects like *In the Footsteps of St. Patrick* and *Wicklow Gold*. However, there was some pioneering spirit and the *First Irish National Pilgrimage to Rome* claimed the distinction of being the longest topical feature of its time—it ran for forty-five minutes.

#### AMERICAN AID

In 1911, an American group, the Kalem Company, sent a fully-equipped unit to spend a year at work in Killarney. With the aid of local enthusiasts they accomplished a programme which was notable for quantity, whatever might be said of the quality. Obviously catering for sentimental exiles, they perpetrated melodramas like *Colleen Bawn*, *Arrah-na-Pogue* and *The Fisherman of Ballydavid*. Perhaps they atoned for their crime of introducing the "stage Irishman" to Cinema by making a useful documentary entitled *Ireland—a Nation*—our first propaganda film!

With the outbreak of the Great War production ceased and it was not until after 1921 that units again went to work. Now they were faced with the Augean task of clearing a place for themselves in a market glutted with trash from Hollywood.

The Film Company of Ireland was formed and produced *Irish Destiny*, a romance set in the Black-and-Tan period

of the War of Independence. From an artistic point of view, it was a rather poor effort and could not claim even technical efficiency. Much superior in quality was the same company's screen version of *Knocknagow*, which was filmed in the actual district described by Charles J. Kickham in his famous novel of old-time life in Tipperary.

Various groups made a small number of comedies, fairly intelligent in nature. From the General Film Supply unit came one of the best, *The Cruiskeen Lawn*, starring Jimmy O'Dea and Fay Sargent.

#### SOUND FILMS

The slow development of Irish Cinema received yet another check when the all-talkies made their appearance. As well as being burdened with additional problems and expense, native producers were now forced to the irksome necessity of travelling to London to complete their work.

The first Irish sound film came from Colonel Victor Haddick of Limerick, who provided the commentary for his *Voice of Ireland*. Neatly edited, it was a tour through the leading beauty spots and was pleasantly enlivened by appropriate songs from Richard Hayward.

Next came *Irish Hearts*, with members of the Abbey Theatre. The trivial story gave Brian Desmond Hurst one of his earliest experiences in direction. Mr. Hurst, now well-known for his work in British studios, has never lost interest in developments in Ireland. His name has been associated with the latest enterprises, to which, indeed, his hard-earned knowledge would prove an invaluable asset.

Richard Hayward produced a series of travel shorts, and also an excellent documentary entitled *In the Footsteps of St. Patrick*, which dealt with places of historic interest. He made numerous comedies, chiefly notable for their rural scenes and earthy humour. Distinctive for a certain homely beauty, they included *Early Bird*, *Luck of the Irish*, *Irish and Proud of It* and *Devil's Rock*.

#### FLAHERTY

In the early thirties came what is, up to the present, about the only really outstanding contribution which Ireland has made to Cinema, namely, *Man of Aran*. W. O'Flaherty went to the primitive outpost of Europe for his subject and achieved a documentary of rare beauty in this record of a simple yet highly dramatic way of life. The film gained a world-wide reputation as a masterpiece.

Unfortunately *Man of Aran* was but a single ripple in the stagnating stream of Irish production. The industrial plan of the Fianna Fail Government seemed to be absorbing all the attentions of those with capital, though there were many voices raised to emphasise the urgent necessity for fostering native enterprise in Film. Critics brought up the point on every possible occasion, quoting *Man of Aran* time and again as a proof that good films could be made comparatively cheaply in this country and would sell in the world market.

The agitation led to a production in Killarney which, I think, was an even greater miracle than the Italian *Open City*—though by no means as artistically effective.

A Mr. Tom Cooper decided to undertake the production of a full-length feature and, as a preliminary, asked the manager of the Kerry Electric Supply Company to draw up a list of the equipment which would be required. Capital was limited and only the barest essentials could be pur-



*My Hands are Clay*

chased, the apparatus being made or assembled on the spot. Several people joined in devising the scenario, using as headline a script which they had managed to obtain from Hollywood. A disused barn was transformed into a studio, walls being sound-proofed and a gallery erected to hold the lighting gear. For the cast local people volunteered and proved to be excellent material, particularly as most of them had experienced in real life incidents similar to those they were now required to act in this romance of "the troubles". The film possessed all the elements of good entertainment, comedy blending with exciting adventure and, in addition, had some pictorial quality as well as a few experiments in technique. For one scene, they made a very effective use of silhouetted figures on a white screen. The film was received with enthusiasm throughout Ireland and attained some distinction in its subsequent travels in Britain and America. A London critic described it as "a film toadden the orthodox technician but yet one which presented its story with true cinematic vigour, concluding with a shot which left me spell-bound in my seat"! The last sequence portrayed a line of guerillas marching along the crest of a field and outlined against a clouded dawn.

Another production, *Uncle Nick*, a comedy, was not so successful and the group disbanded.

One of the amateur script-writers, Donal O'Cahill, was

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commissioned by a company known as the Irish National Film Corporation. For them he wrote the script of *Island Man*, a story of the Kerry Gaeltacht. It featured life on the Blasket Islands and had a similar background to that of *Man of Aran*, though failing to achieve anything like the same beauty. Next a film version of Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, sponsored by no less a person than Gracie Fields, had for its cast members of the Abbey Theatre Company and was made in Galway. Cinematically it was a flop.

#### MUSHROOMS

The Educational Film Company of Ireland made a short on *Kilmainham Jail*—"the Bastille of Ireland", which held many political prisoners. Taking direct photographs of the building and sections of historic interest, they failed to enliven the admittedly difficult subject by imaginative use of the camera.

Amid the mushroom companies one unit has been working with zealous consistency, that of the Irish Tourist Association. A series of competent documentaries, on topical events and places of interest, includes *Dublin of the Welcomes*, *Top of the Morning* and *Ireland's Gold*. Fully alive to the power of the film in the development of tourist traffic, they are continuing with an ambitious programme.

Indeed, there are signs that the instructional possibilities of Cinema are being more generally appreciated, thanks largely to the work of the National Film Institute. The Institute plans to make educational and documentary films suitable to our own particular requirements. Hibernia Films and smaller units have been canvassing with some success for contracts with public bodies and commercial interests.

During "the Emergency" the Government commissioned quite a number of brief productions to encourage recruiting for the Defence Forces and also to spur the farmers into growing more wheat. These were more remarkable for the beauty of the photography than for the force of their respective messages. The same fault is to be found in a more ambitious project, *A Nation Once Again*, sponsored in 1945 to commemorate the centenary of Thomas Davis, a national poet. It contrasted the despairing misery of the famine years with the vigorous enterprise

which has been fostered by native governments of the present century. The scenario was conceived and directed by Mr. John D. Sheridan, a member of the Film Institute. Arrangements were made for a wide distribution in Britain and the United States. The latest project to be sponsored by the Government is a series for a Safety First campaign.

To date, I'm afraid, we in Ireland cannot claim to have made much practical contribution to Cinema, but it is not unlikely that we will make up for this in the near future. At any rate, the Press is doing its bit by chastening as strictly as possible every scrap of home production. An imported film will be criticised with tolerance; the "Irish" ones with long-suffering good humour; but when a native creation is released, foreign epics are crammed into a corner to provide ample whipping space!

Next to come under the lash will be *My Hands are Clay*, from Dublin Films, and *St. Francis of Assisi*, for which Irish Screen Art, Ltd., went on location to Italy.

## THE TECHNIQUE OF REALISM

By

D. A. YERRILL

THE DELIBERATE STRIVING AFTER REALISM, whether in the novel, on the stage or the screen, destroys where it tries hardest to create. For after all it is not in what is most generally accepted as realism in art, which is little more than the sentimental recognition and expression of circumstances, behaviour, or surroundings, that true realism lies. This "sentimental" or "sympathetic" realism panders to the mental laziness of audiences, it dulls their senses, puts their imagination to sleep, tends more and more to cause the loss of the "pattern" which it is the place of art to superimpose on life. True realism is seldom recognized as such; and it is often something which accrues as an after effect.

Anyone who has seen the Italian film, *Roma, Città Aperta*, will agree that it has unforgettable realism. It does not need a very close examination of this film, however, to realise that so far from being "realistic" in the commonly held sense of the term, it is a rather "mannered" piece: it is a film in which the "art" is singularly ill-disguised. In *Open City* we are aware throughout of the hand of the artist, the touch here, the movement there, the jig-saw facility of construction, the rounded completeness. Seeing the film we are not conscious of the distracting realities of life. Rome, ruined streets, an empty church, Gestapo headquarters—here were ample opportunities for the introduction of "real" material to fill the canvas. But there is no extraneous material. Everything, every character, every movement, all are essential to the life of the film. Everything contributes. It is a pattern, a carefully composed pattern conceived in the mind of a deliberate artist. The result, on reflection, is real to a terrifying degree; frightening because with no conscious effort we find ourselves living again

moments in the film. We have lived with the people in the film, we know them; and when we recall the film we recall our own experience. It does not do to ask "how is it done?". It is enough that this sort of magic can come to the screen.

### THE DISCIPLINE OF ART

It is another matter to ask, "Why don't we see this sort of thing more often?"; for to this question the dismal answer is, "Because we don't see many Continental films".

Not that the English lack the touch that makes a *Vivere in Pace* or a *Les Portes de la Nuit*: not that there is something lacking in the English character that makes it impossible for them to produce great films. Shakespeare, with his two contending armies on the stage, his four conspirators behind the box-hedge, his storms at sea, his apparitions and his boy-heroines—Shakespeare knew what realism was. But he, the unfortunate, had to deal with a small stage; his conceptions were immense, his medium "inadequate". But he was not unfortunate in one particular: he suffered limitations—but he rejoiced in the discipline they enforced. Art without discipline is less than art.

Any poet will testify that it is easier to write a sonnet than a stanza of *vers libre*. Or, if "easier" is the wrong word, that the use of the former medium gives a better chance of producing something great than the use of the latter. If, in a diffuse age, the poet uses a diffuse medium, a medium in which it is all too easy to think and speak carelessly, loosely, with woolly slovenliness, then he substitutes for the arbitrary discipline of Petrarch or Spenser a discipline of

his own mind. To-day, the artist (the film-maker is the artist of our time) has a truly tremendous scope. The moving, talking picture is such a colossal power that the man in the director's chair might be forgiven for imagining that he is God in *locum tenens*. To show the world as it is is art: with the precepts of Aristotle well in mind the maker of films proceeds to put the world on celluloid.

Largely, there are two ways of doing it.

*Open City* was one way. *It Always Rains on Sunday* another. With an agonising lust for Realism At Any Price the director of *It Always Rains on Sunday* takes a great slice from a living part of London and serves it up, dripping with its blood, its severed members hanging loosely, its life extinct. To show this aspect of London life, apparently, we must have everything in. Let 'em all come, the spiv, the crook with the kind heart and the crook without, the pious receiver of stolen goods, the winsome child, the cop, the publican, the 'barrer' boy, the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker, not to mention the long-suffering heroine and the time-serving hero. And if the thing looks a bit ragged after all, with all the strands of plot and character hanging loose—tie the ends all together in one big knot of coincidence and hope it will hold.

#### CONTINENTAL EXCEPTIONS

Alberto Rossellini, in *Open City*, has commendably resisted every temptation to superimpose a little "realism" on his film; he has been, perhaps, "arty-crafty". But the director of *It Always Rains on Sunday* has fallen every time. The result is that there are innumerable instances of extraneous material—in incident, in character, in scene—put into the film *simply because they exist in life*. As John Grierson says: "Few at heart will believe in it, and where there is no belief there is only melodrama".

A spectator in a picture-gallery who admires an artist's representation of a glass vessel might wonder how it is done; how it stands there, in the canvas, so startlingly real. Looking closely he sees that there is no painting of the glass as such, it is only indicated. In the same way Rome is indicated in *Open City*, or Paris in *Les Portes de la Nuit*. The film director who attempts to bend his enormous mechanical power to the task of depicting reality too easily becomes like a scientist explaining to a blind man what "red" is. The scientist, while he uses his own scientific terminology, cannot do it: it takes a poet to explain, describe, to indicate the "whatness" of a thing.

Not that every director should be a Rouquier; and although *Farrebique* was essentially real, it was so in a very different way from the de Rochemont-Hathaway masterpiece, *Boomerang*, or from Vigo's *L'Atalante*, or from Chaplin's *Monsieur Verdoux*. Realism is found in such widely varying types of film as the "symphony" of Rouquier, social documentary, fantasy and satire. It must be remembered that film realism cannot be a quality of the film alone—it is a quality that arises out of the act of an audience watching, and listening to, a film. That is why realism can be ascribed to the fantasies—*L'Eternel Retour*

and *Les Visiteurs de Soir*, where symbols are used as an economical means, legitimate in art, to call up ideas and images that would be laboured to death if stated in diffuse, "unpatterned" detail as in life itself. And although watching a film like *Les Visiteurs du Soir*, and feeling at the time that it is unreal and fantastic, afterwards, later, it is realised that an *idea* has remained, that there has been some sort of strange reorganisation in the mind.

#### AND THE AMERICANS

And what was it about *Boomerang* that was so real, so lastingly significant? And how was it that a film in which similar ingredients were apparently used, *Brighton Rock*, was, by comparison, so poor? In both films a lot of shooting was done at the actual scene of the story; but with this difference, that Hathaway had the wit to "focus" his material, to step outside it and, grabbing essentials, to put on celluloid a deliberate pattern. The director of *Brighton Rock*, on the other hand, was at great pains to fill every corner of his canvas with extraneous matter, particularly in point of character, until the background claimed that attention which should have been focussed on the foreground. And although this was permissible in the novel it provided a fatal distraction in the film; the deliberate search for realism, within the tempting *possible* material for the film, resulted in its being very nearly suffocated.

"Business", said Chaplin in *Monsieur Verdoux*, "is a ruthless business". So, as he obviously knows, is film-directing. How much pruning, how much shearing away of unnecessary stuff must go on before the bare, undecorated work of art stands out was amply demonstrated by *Monsieur Verdoux*. Nearly every director operating to-day could learn something from Chaplin's lightness of touch and enviable capacity for significant selection. He has remembered, and they have forgotten, Quiller-Couch's excellent advice to "murder your darlings".

It is a paradox that humanity, if in art it is slavishly imitated from life, is unrecognizable to humanity. In order to make human beings recognizable to human beings it is necessary in art to draw them a little larger than life. In the case of the ballet, a great deal larger, in the case of the theatre, an appreciable amount larger, and in the case of the cinema a little larger, but the magnification must be there. And, while drawing life a little larger in point of quality, it is at the same time necessary to draw it a little smaller in point of potentiality. This dual metamorphosis is the artistic conception, the conception that most film directors seem to have forgotten. And if they shy at the words "art" and "artistic" (both in danger of joining debased coinage like "culture" and "aesthetic") we talk of the classic and not of the C.E.M.A. definitions.

So far from Ellen Wilkinson's desire that this might become a "third-programme nation", it is to be hoped that the primary art form of our day will reflect life as it is lived, and portray human beings as they know themselves to be, for they have neither the genius nor the resources of our film makers.



*Ossessione*

*The Italians—I*

## LUCHINO VISCONTI'S "OSSESSIONE"

*By*

VERNON JARRATT

AT FIRST GLANCE it is a little remarkable that the best film version of a very well-known American novel should have been made in Italy; but only at first glance. For the America of "The Postman Always Rings Twice" is not that of Mr. Marquand's Boston or Mr. Runyon's New York or even Mr. Chandler's Pacific Coast. Mr. Cain's story is one of which the purely physical aspects of love-making, eating and drinking, of which the primitive emotions of lust and jealousy or brutality and murderousness are the very stuff. I don't wish to malign my beloved Mediterranean countries, but I think that that is why a Latin version was bound to be so good. For good it was, and make no mistake. Visconti's first film is one of the cinema's great

pieces of work, to which the nearest parallel is probably Feyder's *Therese Raquin* or Pabst's *Loves of Jeanne Ney*.

Luchino Visconti started off with an initial touch of genius. He transported the whole story—characters, setting, incidents, everything—to the flat, marshy country where the Po begins to widen out into its delta. There, in a crude country trattoria<sup>1</sup> he brought his characters to life with astonishing skill; the husband—middle-aged, fat, greasy, kindly, uxorious, completely normal for his world; the wife—a passionate slut, a Madame Bovary with more of the

<sup>1</sup> A small country inn, selling food and wine, and where people dance on festa days.



*Ossessione*

flesh and less of the sentiment, moved by something more than lust and less than love, something which takes possession of her, uses her, and throws her away when it has done with her, a woman with the temperament of a Borgia but lacking the will and the ability to overcome the handicaps of her education and breeding; the lover—a much more ordinary character than the wife, not so much frightened as uneasy, embarrassed at having raised unwittingly a storm which he can neither match nor ride; you understand him perfectly when you see him seeking refuge in the arms of a cheap little trollop whom he picks up on one of his attempts to escape his fate, because here he has something with which he can cope.

#### REALISM

Visconti has placed these characters, all of whom are superbly realised in the round, in a setting of the most admirably convincing and suitable reality. Realism may not be by any means an essential artistic virtue, but in this type of film it is a *sine qua non*, and if it is lacking everything

falls to the ground. But the trattoria itself, the surrounding country, the railway trains, the fair at Ancona, the day-long festa at the trattoria one holiday, the host of minor characters, the crowds, are all superlatively real. You can almost smell the garlic and the sweat, taste the harsh red wine and the bowls of minestrone, feel the hot sun on your face and the gritty road underneath your feet. If I were an Italian from Emilia and saw this film abroad, I should break down and cry with sheer homesickness, so real and immediate is the impact.

The part of the husband is played by Juan de Landa, a minor actor who here found his one perfect part and was induced (or allowed?) to play it perfectly; the wife is played by Clara Calamai, an actress of distinction who has always done her best work in the portrayal of this sort of character, but who has never before or since equalled her work in *Ossessione*; Massimo Girotti plays the lover; if I say he plays it with complete adequacy that sounds like faint praise, but it is not intended as such, for a part of this sort where most of the sympathy and most of the fireworks go to the other two, is difficult indeed. Against the sultry, devouring passion of the wife he can offer only a sudden flame of simple desire which as suddenly dies down again; he must portray an increasing uneasiness which is more instinctive than understood, like that of an animal that knows the butcher is near until his uneasiness drives him to flight, a flight in which he finds in the wife's absence no more peace than he found in her presence; he must show his satiety and fear and distaste as he finds himself, after the husband's murder, saddled with a veritable incubus. If, to demands of this sort, you can reply "adequate", that is high praise.

#### CENSOR AND COPYRIGHT

To these characters Visconti and his script writers added a purely bonus character, a wandering cheap-jack and small time confidence trickster, played with the same superb realism as the others by Roldano Lopi; his addition was a minor inspiration. The lovers meet him when he has fled from the trattoria, from the husband of whom he has become jealous, from the wife whose unbridled passion is beginning to frighten him. Roldano Lopi embodies for him the visible ideal of his old life, the life of carefree vagabondage and the juxtaposition adds the final ironic touch to his bitterness and his destruction when he finds that his unwilling involvement in an intrigue that oppresses and distresses him has also made impossible his return to his old life.

*Ossessione* was made in 1942. It had a hard time at the hands of the Fascist censorship, and it is very much to be hoped that the recently stiffening attitude of the present Italian censorship will not result in this masterpiece being again occluded. If, that is, the present copyright troubles are solved. For the film was unfortunately made without the minor formality of acquiring the film rights of the book, and M.G.M.'s attitude does not seem to be exactly "Oh, well! let bygones be bygones".

## FRANCESCO DE ROBERTIS

By

VERNON JARRATT

Francesco de Robertis is a unique director. Not only because he has written the story and dialogue from his own original idea for each of the six films he has made so far, acted as his own producer and even written the whole of the music for one film and part of the music for others, but rather because he has never used an actor in any of them. I forgot one exception; the Italian actor Gandusio has a small part in one of them—*Marinai Senza Stelle*; but then he plays the part of an actor, acting before the boys of a naval training ship; so in a sense he was, like the rest, only impersonating himself.

De Robertis came into films in a rather odd way. He was a career naval officer, with a good deal of submarine experience. In the intervals of his career and when circumstances permitted he had taken a mild interest in the theatre, going to see a play whenever he found himself in the same town as a good company. In 1932 he saw, at La Spezia, the great Italian naval base, a drama called "Capo 41" by Luigi Chiarelli. It dealt with life in a submarine, and it annoyed De Robertis by its false atmosphere and even more false detail. He wrote a stinging criticism of the play, and then decided that if he could criticise the play he could probably do better himself, and embarked on a career of playwriting as a sideline to his professional activities.

He wrote six plays, of which the first four have been produced; three of them did well, and one was a fiasco. Like all authors he swears that this was the best of the lot. In his first incursion into the literary field he did a thing not uncommon—wrote about a subject of which he was almost totally ignorant: American journalism. In his second play he began to explore his own field, and wrote a drama of the psychological conflicts that arise in a naval officer's family because of his absences from home. The third play was a comedy and the nine characters are all women (thus anticipating Ilka Chase's opus), convinced that they can do everything better than men. This was the fiasco. The fourth was a melodrama of life in Sardinia, which he knows well. Of the two unproduced plays one is a comedy dealing with the problems of an old husband with a wife much younger than himself, and one is a rather Pirandellian drama about a man whose heart is removed, and replaced by an artificial heart of the type on which Lindberg and Carrel worked. All these plays were written while he was on the active list.

In 1938 three submarines went to the bottom in rapid succession. One was our own ill-fated *Thetis*, the others were French and American respectively. The succession of tragedies naturally roused great interest in naval circles everywhere, particularly in Italy, where they had developed escape apparatus of various types to a greater extent, they thought, than any other country. The Ministry of the Marine therefore decided to make an instructional short on the subject of their own escape apparatuses, and they

asked De Robertis to oversee the job as a sort of technical adviser, choosing him partly because of his technical knowledge of the subject, partly because of his known literary abilities.

### NELSON TOUCH

De Robertis, whose ideas were not nearly so modest, tried to persuade the Ministry of the Marine to let him make a full length film of the type which we call a "documentary feature" on the subject; the Ministry were not at all enthusiastic, convinced that the subject was not of sufficient interest for such treatment. De Robertis then tried his wiles on Scalera, who was to be responsible for the production of the film, or at least for providing the technical crew. Scalera was even less enthusiastic, declaring, quite truly, that De Robertis had had absolutely no experience of cinema work and knew nothing about it.

Temporarily baffled, but not defeated, De Robertis executed a truly Nelsonian manœuvre. He went to La Spezia with his Scalera-provided technical crew, told them that they were under naval discipline, would obey his orders in everything, and would not lift a finger, much less leave the ship, without his express permission. Then, while both the Ministry and Scalera were convinced that he was making his 250 metre instructional film, proceeded to make instead the 2,500 metre documentary feature that he had from the first determined to produce.

The film was begun in October, 1939. For the first two months De Robertis saw no rushes, for Scalera, first puzzled and then worried by the enormous footage pouring in from La Spezia, was someone whom De Robertis had no wish to meet just at that moment. By the time that four months had gone by the Ministry and Scalera seemed resigned to the impossibility of stopping him and he was allowed to complete his brain-child more or less in peace. It was finished in March, 1940. De Robertis had written the story and dialogue and part of the music (Carducci wrote the rest). It was called *Uomini sul Fondo* (Men at the Bottom of the Sea), and it was a great success.

At this point the story takes an ironical twist. De Robertis' first film was supposed to have been an instructional short; to satisfy himself, and in the teeth of everybody's opposition, he made it a normal full length film. His second, also made for the Ministry of Marine, was planned by him as an instructional short on naval medical services. When the 1941 Venice Festival was looming up the Italians found themselves with no long war film to set against the Germans' two or three, and De Robertis was ordered to make it full length. This he did, inserting the usual love affair between a nurse and a sailor and some similar frippery. One can't help feeling that it rather served him right. This was the film called *La Nave Bianca* (The White Ship).

For his third film, called *Alpha Tau*, he returned to the world of the submarine. As in all his films he wrote the

story and dialogue himself, though this time Carducci wrote the whole of the music. It is a pleasant, natural, honest film, woven out of the small incidents of life at the naval barracks which act as base for a submarine flotilla, and not unlike such films as *The Lamp Still Burns* or *The Gentle Sex*. An interesting point about it is that De Robertis was beginning to indulge his determination to film only reality wherever possible, and in *Alpha Tau* there is no studio work at all. In *Uomini Sul Fondo* the scenes in the submarine itself had all been shot in a specially-built reconstruction of a submarine interior; the technicians had told him that photographing actually inside a submarine was impossible. By this time he had his own ideas of what was possible and what was not, and all the submarine interiors in *Alpha Tau* were shot in submarine interiors. No reconstructions this time.

*Alpha Tau* was made in 1942. In 1943 De Robertis made two films, *Uomini e Cieli* (Men and Skies), and *Marinai Senza Stelle* (Sailors Without Stars). For the first he wrote the music as well as, inevitably, the story and dialogue. The story, more involved than in any of his other films, is of four Air Force pilots. Two, Varna and Renzi, are idealists, Varna idealizing the outward forms of life and Renzi its inner realities; two are materialists, Taddei and Nurus. I will not elaborate its plot, which traces the effect on their beliefs of the accidents of war, of Varna's loss of an arm, Renzi's loss of a leg, and Taddei's resignation from the Air Force, where he so fears mutilation, to manage his father's munitions factory. There are some good scenes in the film; the direction evokes, as always, the same feeling of sincerity and supreme naturalness from people who are not actors but men who have been persuaded to do naturally, in front of the camera, what they do every day of their lives. I feel that, artistically, it is De Robertis' least successful film. It was shot almost entirely in the studios; perhaps that is why.

*Marinai Senza Stelle*, on the other hand, is a most charming film. The chief characters are two boys, pupils on a naval training ship for orphans, and deadly rivals in everything. Two scenes stand out as supreme in the film. One is when all the boys in the orphanage climb out of their dormitory at night and go down to the ship to fight a mock battle for its possession between the two factions into which the orphanage is divided; this is one of those scenes, so rare and so satisfactory in the cinema, when the visual beauty of the scene exactly matches the emotional content, and by its matching heightens both enormously; the scene lingers on in your mind, giving the same reassurance that there is, after all, some ultimate justification for the world as is given by, say, one of Herrick's poems or a Utrillo painting. The other scene is very different. It is a courtroom scene, for the relatives of the two orphans have got themselves involved in some very heated litigation over a boat they were supposed to be building together. This little scene is a gem of the purest natural comedy, with not a line or a grimace or a movement overplayed. Not one of the characters had ever seen a camera before in his life; and not one performance is less than perfect.

His last film, to date, is in many ways his best. It is called *La Vita Semplice* (The Simple Life). All the scenes are laid in Venice, and, with one or two very small exceptions, there are no studio shots at all.

The story is really a fable, with a lovely rhythmic proportion in its construction. The film opens with a gondola, peacefully making its time-unaltered way along

the Grand Canal, and nearly upset by the wash from a speeding launch; the launch contains an industrialist (he has a factory for building materials) who symbolises all that is hasty, angry, pre-occupied in our way of living; busy with the papers in his brief-case he has no time for the gondola, no time for the beauty of the Grand Canal. But he needs, for an extension to his factory, the land where the gondolier whom he nearly upsets in the opening scene pursues, peacefully, happily, and without undue haste, his craft of building gondolas. The boatbuilder won't sell; why should he? He doesn't want any more money—he has enough to live on. He doesn't want to move—he's lived there all his life, and intends to die there. He doesn't want to retire—he wants to go on building gondolas, peacefully, happily, and without undue haste.

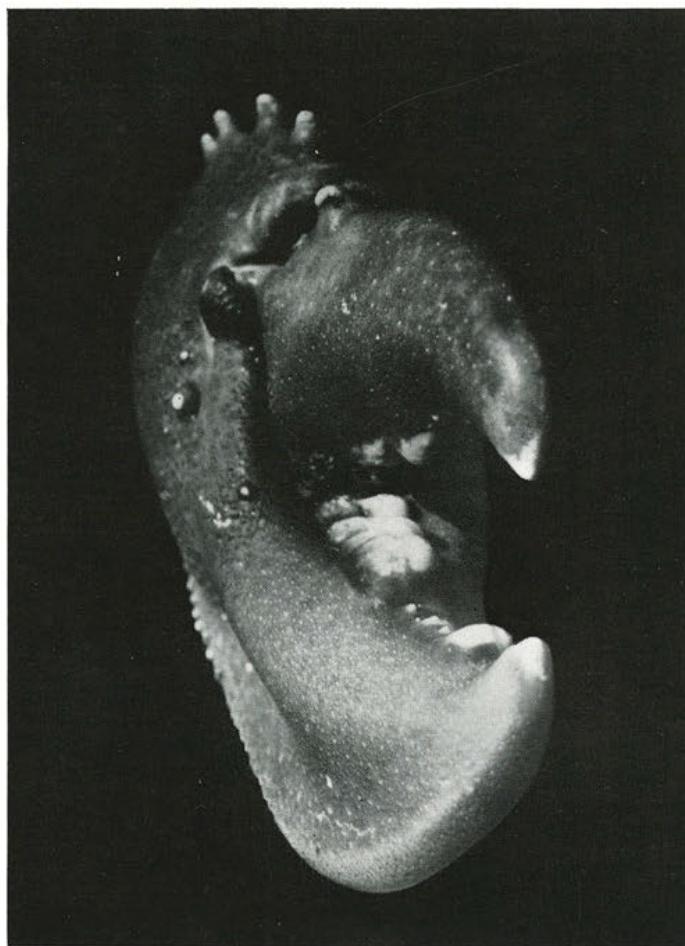
Counterpointing this conflict is the love story between the industrialist's daughter and the boatbuilder's son, a love affair which De Robertis handles with the most delightful and really idyllic ease and charm; it is a love affair like the sunlight that dances on the water of the Grand Canal itself, simple, natural, happy, uncomplicated; Daphnis and Chloe in Venice.

The final sequence brings the whole fable to a nicely rounded close. The young couple are wed, and have departed in the bridal gondola. Down the Canal after them drift the now reconciled oldsters, the boatbuilder ceremoniously decked out in his best, the industrialist relaxing in unaccustomed democratic ease. Their gondola is violently rocked by the waves of a speeding launch, and the last we see of the industrialist he is vigorously cursing this blatant and insensitive disturber of the Venetian peace.

Summing up De Robertis' gifts, and his contributions to the cinema, I would say, first, that he is outstanding in his handling of ordinary people; only in Russian films have I seen equally good performances from men and women with no technical training; secondly that he has that intense interest in people in relation to their daily work and ordinary lives that we are accustomed to in the best of the documentary and "feature-documentary" school in Britain, but that is rare abroad; and thirdly that in his films you get the sense of unity that comes from the whole work being that of one man—story, dialogue, direction, production: Chaplin and Olivier are perhaps the greatest exemplars of this, but De Robertis follows not unworthily behind.

De Robertis uses a printed form out of which he constructs his shooting script. It provides for details of the action, and whether this follows the previous scene by a direct cut, a fade in, or a dissolve or wipe and how the next scene follows on; for the dialogue; for the musical theme, the noise effects, the effects to be mixed in during dubbing or to be taken from the sound library; for the numbers of the takes which are o.k. to print, and those o.k. as spares; for the lens size and the focal distance; the metrage and time of the scene; continuity notes; a sketch of the scene; a note as to whether it is day or night; the date when shot; notes for dubbing and cutting; the rhythm and feeling of the scene, and a number of other smaller matters.

Seven volumes of these sheets make up the shooting script of each of his films. And before he begins the first shot of a film every detail on this form (except, of course, those—such as which takes to print—which can only be inserted afterwards) is already completed. The film is complete in his own mind down to the last detail before the first camera begins to turn.



Crabes et Crevettes

Painlevé

AS WE ALL KNOW, the war years saw a tremendous enlargement in the use of the film outside the public cinemas. Through the growing awareness of the many exciting potentialities of the film this expansion brought with it interest in the scientific film. Denis Segaller told in the last number of *SIGHT AND SOUND* something of the story of this freshened interest and how it came to be co-ordinated on a national scale in 1943 when the Scientific Film Association came into being. Naturally enough, the arrival of peace and the establishment of U.N.E.S.C.O. provided much extended opportunities for the movement to make contact with those producing and using scientific films abroad. One of the first of these opportunities occurred in the summer of 1945 when the Association was invited to participate in a Scientific Film Congress in liberated Paris.

This Congress was, of course, a re-birth of the annual meetings begun by Painlevé and Claoué in the early thirties. Reading again the account of the last of these pre-war occasions in a ten-year-old copy of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, one is struck by the absence of any mention of British scientific films though, of course, the work of such pioneers as Percy Smith and Dr. Canti were well known on the Continent. At the 1945 Congress, our scientific films represented the largest group from any one country apart from France itself—they included *Scabies Mite* with its superb cinematography, *World of Plenty*, extraordinarily international and forward-looking for a film made in war-time, and one of the last examples of Percy Smith's work.

## OVER THE FRONTIER

*A Progress Report on the Scientific Film in the International Field. This article by JOHN MADDISON is the second of a series prepared for SIGHT & SOUND by the Scientific Film Association*

But the Congress was not, of course, useful only in allowing us to tell our friends in Europe something of what we had been doing. We, in turn, were able to discover what had been happening to them. One of the films shown was the last to be made by the surgeon de Martel before he shot himself rather than continue to live in the shadow of Nazism. Painlevé had narrowly escaped from the Gestapo and had emerged with the Resistance to continue his work in his cine-laboratory. The well-known astronomer Lyot had been able to continue his work with the cinematographer Leclerc and, in 1941, had produced certain curious sequences in which the planet Mars is seen rotating on the screen, and a striking record of a solar eruption taken at 45 frames per hour. From Switzerland we saw a charming if not very polished example of a school natural history film *The Sea Gull*, and *Morphology of Flowers* from Italy very competently exploiting stop-motion techniques for recording botanical growth. Most important of all, perhaps, were the discussions between ourselves and the French which followed the Congress and which continued into 1946 on ways and means of establishing an International Scientific Film Organisation.

In October, 1946, when the second Paris Congress was arranged by the French, plans for a useful organisation, far-reaching in its possibilities were taking shape. A strong delegation from Britain attended the congress, and discussed these plans with delegates from several other countries. The decision, bold as it seemed at the time, was taken to call together a conference in 1947 for the purpose of inaugurating an international scientific film association. The French Institut de Cinematographie Scientifique and the Scientific Film Association accepted the burden of making preparations for this congress. At all stages, U.N.E.S.C.O. gave help and encouragement. Everyone was persuaded that first things must come first, and that the means for helping those making and using films must have a major role in the project. It was this conviction that animated those of us who drafted in the early months of 1947 the terms of a constitution later adopted after certain modifications of detail. The following short extract from its preamble will illustrate what I mean :—

The Association (i.e., the International Scientific Film Association) believes that international understanding will be greatly helped through its members pledging themselves to the provision of certain practical and urgently-needed services. Stated briefly, these are the freest, widest and most efficient exchange of (1) information about the production, the use and the effect of all types of scientific films, (2) films themselves and cinematic material, (3) the personal experience, skills and ideas of workers in scientific cinematography.

Delegates from twenty-two countries attended the 1947 inaugural congress in Paris, and it was clear from their

speeches at the opening session, how wide geographically was the interest in scientific films and the problems they raised. The British Commonwealth was strongly represented. Jim Harris of New Zealand brought greetings from all the main organisations concerned with the scientific and cultural film there. I personally found his news of the coverage the New Zealand Government Film Unit gives to science in its newsreels for public cinemas exceptionally stimulating. The examples Harris brought with him, *Camera on Ruapehu* and *Seed Testing Station*, revealed that newsreel presentation need not be raucous and hectoring. Key, of Australia, told of the beginnings of scientific film production by the National Film Board, the Universities, the Wool Research Organisation and others, and of the work of the Film Section of the National Library at Canberra. Ralph Elton speaking for Malaya made an important contribution; one problem there was the need for multilingual versions. Korngold of Poland stressed his country's desire for scientific films from abroad for the eight-hundred mobile projectors serving its schools, and for the co-operation of technicians from other countries to help them in their problem of scientific film production. Information of new or recently created scientific film associations was given from three countries: Switzerland, Belgium and Canada.

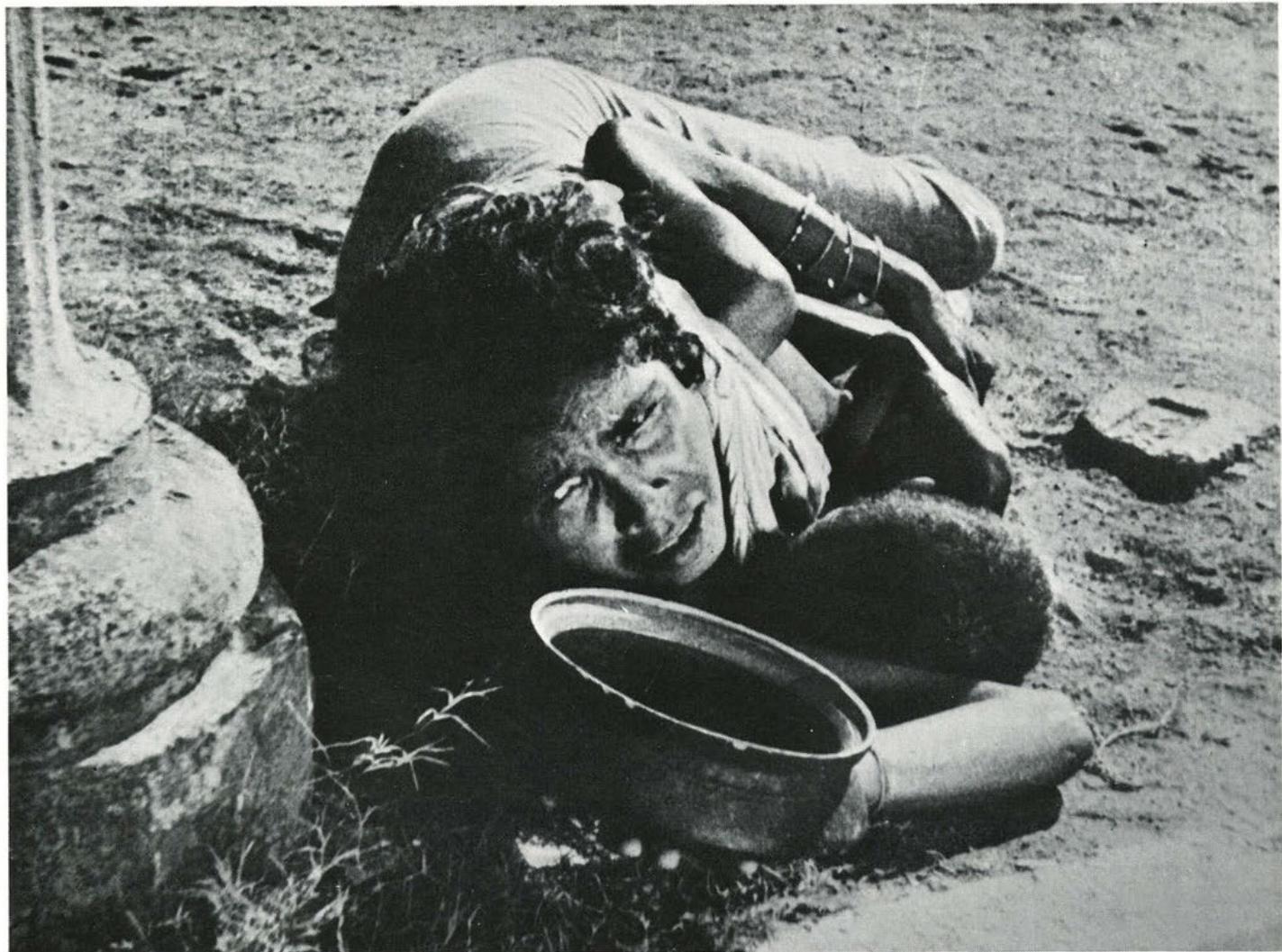
Two main directions which the activities of the International Scientific Association might take were, in a way, reflected in the speeches from Britain and France.

For Britain, Basil Wright, at that time its President, stressed the important part which the *users* of scientific films had played in building up the Scientific Film Association. Such organisations as the Scientific Film Societies need films from other countries. The accent on use brings out two of the principal functions which the international body must attempt to fulfil. First there must be a great expansion in the exchange of information about films. Throughout its history, the Scientific Film Association has emphasised the need for standardised catalogues and lists, and for the appraisal of films. All this is immensely significant internationally. The scientist and the cinematographer in Europe, for example, needs to know what films are being produced in Asia and Africa and Australasia, and what is their value and appropriateness by standards as critical as those used in the international diffusion of printed scientific data. And, of course, we need to have access to each other's films. Barriers raised by Customs formalities and expense and ignorance need to be broken down. More than fifty films were shown at the 1947 Congress and these demonstrated how many-sided and interesting are the



Children Learning by Experience

Realist for C.O.I.



*The World is Rich*

Paul Rotha for C.O.I.

scientific films being produced throughout the world. There were medical films, like the American Holinger's superb combination of the movie camera and bronchoscopy and the Soviet *Artificial Oesophagus*, biological research studies like Hughes of Cambridge's films on tissue culture and the viscosity of cytoplasm using phase-contrast microscopy and polarised light, Professor Pijper of Pretoria's thesis film on *The Motility of Bacteria* and Storch of Vienna's slow-motion records of fresh water animalculæ; Mountford's colour film *Churunga*, on the life of the Stone Age men of Central Australia. And there were also films on the outskirts of science, so to speak, especially Cousteau's remarkable portrayal of under-sea life *Landscapes of Silence*, not at all scientific in intention but nevertheless in some ways a *féerie* of science. Films of this range and variety have, at present, too limited an audience. The International Scientific Film Association has set itself the difficult task of giving such films a world-wide circulation.

In his speech as French Delegate, Painlevé dwelt on the production of scientific films, recalling the long list of distinguished workers in the field France has produced since the days when Marey first investigated problems of movement with the camera and when Comandon began his remarkable career as a cinematicographer. The production

of scientific films can be developed internationally in two ways. Technicians can be lent from one country to another. Films, too, can be produced by international co-operation. Ideas for internationally made films were put forward at the 1947 Congress. Characteristically, Painlevé himself has prepared a treatment for a grandiose international film research project called *From Cilia to Wings* on the whole question of animal locomotion. Kern, of Switzerland, asked for international collaboration in a film he is making on Vitamins. Agricultural parasitology is another field in which international co-operation has been proposed and, as a beginning, information is being sought on documents and films relating to the live liver fluke, an internationally infamous parasite.

The 1947 Congress was, of course, only the beginning. At the 1948 Congress the first year's progress will be reviewed and further activities set in train. This Congress, to which all the nations of the World are being invited, is to be held in London in October. The international body has entrusted the Scientific Film Association with the organisation of this week of activity, which will include a three-day film festival open to the public. It will be the first time any series of meetings of such wide implications in this field has been held in Britain.



*Gentleman's Agreement*

20th Century-Fox

## HOLLYWOOD REPORT

By

ROBERT MAYER

GLARE CAUSED BY the publicity and spotlight centred around the Hollywood investigation undertaken by the House Un-American Activities Committee have obscured an event which, in all probability, will have a more lasting effect on the development of America's movie industry than Mr. Parnell Thomas's vote of censure.

On November 11th, 1947, Twentieth Century-Fox released Darryl F. Zanuck's *Gentleman's Agreement* in a Broadway theatre where it has been playing to capacity audiences ever since. The old myth that controversial films are box office poison has been exploded at a time when film-makers, intimidated by attacks from without, are ready to settle for escapist entertainment.

*Gentleman's Agreement* is the second film that uses the evils of anti-Semitism for its theme. The first, R.K.O.'s *Crossfire*, released last summer, was a highly melodramatic murder mystery, in which the killer is a demented anti-Semite, and the victim a Jew. Several lines, especially those spoken by Robert Young towards the end of the

picture, are a forceful indictment of racial intolerance. Their significance, however, is obscured by the very method of their presentation. The average film-goer may recoil from the insane race-hatred that leads to a senseless murder, but he can easily quiet his conscience with the conviction that he never has approved of such thoughts, and would not associate with persons who do.

*Gentleman's Agreement*, which chooses a more adult approach to the same problem, uses understatement rather than melodrama. The film must have a most disturbing effect on the thousands who are still flocking to see it. For this time they recognize themselves, their friends and neighbours in the role of "villains". Their own patterns of speech, thought and behaviour come under fire; their prejudices are laid bare, and, stripped of all glib excuses, they are exposed to scorn.

The story is simple. Phil Green (Gregory Peck), a reporter, is called to New York by a magazine publisher, who wants him to write a series on anti-Semitism. Phil,

not satisfied with the cold statistics of discrimination offered by the magazine's research department, pretends to be a Jew himself to find out what it feels like to be one. A native Californian, he has no acquaintances in New York, and the masquerade is a success. Phil Green finds the material he asked for, and more. Colleagues on the magazine's staff begin to snub him—suddenly they had known all the time that he was a Jew. They belong to the "You can always tell a Jew" kind. Phil suffers dozens of little indignities. He is refused admittance to a resort hotel where he made reservations. When his son is barred from the games of his schoolmates, Phil's friend, Capt. Dave Goldman (John Garfield) remarks that now Phil knows the worst of it—being hurt by the injustice done to his child.

A moving love story is expertly woven into the pattern of the film. Phil, a widower, is drawn to Cathy (Dorothy McGuire), niece of the publisher for whom he is writing the series. Although she had suggested the articles, her easy-going liberalism almost crumbles when people believe that her fiance is a Jew, and she asks at first Phil's permission to tell her upper crust neighbours that he is not really Jewish.

*Gentleman's Agreement* could not have been released at a more opportune moment. Its success proves that a controversial picture, if it is well presented, can draw large crowds at a time when most movie-makers, frightened by a Congressional investigation, seem to believe that Hollywood must limit itself to straight entertainment if it is to avoid further censure.

It would be foolish to deny, as it has been attempted in some quarters, the stifling effect of the recent "exposure" of Hollywood as the hotbed of Communist intrigue.

Mervyn Le Roy, who made *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, said that to-day he would not touch a similar theme with a ten-foot pole. "The screen is under attack from all sides, at the moment", he told Howard Barnes, film and theatre critic of the "New York Herald Tribune". "The best thing it can do is to settle for what critics call escapist entertainment until the storm blows over".

Unfortunately, the Thomas Committee has failed to reveal which films it considers to have been subversive. Unkind tongues were quick to draw the conclusion that silence meant ignorance, and that not even Mr. Thomas could find one Un-American Thought in Hollywood films. Yet this is no joking matter. Silence in this instance has proved by far more destructive than a listing of perhaps a dozen objectionable films could ever have been. I do not believe that this was a deliberate move; the harm it has done could not have been greater if it had been the result of careful planning. As long as there is no official list of subversive films, everybody is free to supply one of his own making. In the meantime, all films are under suspicion and Hollywood wilts under the attack from crackpot groups and vociferous, if self-appointed, crusaders, who even accused Samuel Goldwyn's *The Best Years of Our Lives* of harbouring subversive thoughts.

The House Un-American Committee is strangely coy about saying which films are, in its opinion, subversive. Others are not as reticent. A lady who is writing a widely-read Hollywood column suggested some time ago that the

Committee give its special attention to *So Well Remembered*, made in England by English and American artists. Unless the authors of the film managed to hide their subversive thoughts so well that they could no longer be detected by ordinary film-goers, it must be assumed that this lady objected to the sequences in which an idealistic young fellow fights for cleaner living and safer working conditions in a dismal Lancashire mill town.

Are we to believe that social questions shall no longer be treated on the screen? The tone of a recent luncheon speech made by Eric Johnston, President of the Motion Picture Association of America, shows that the danger of these rumours has been recognized. Mr. Johnston alluded to reports that the presentation on the screen of bankers as villains has been prohibited. He denied them vigorously. "If a decent, sensible story happens to call for an unsympathetic character to be a banker", he said, "then a banker he can be, and I myself happen to be a director of several banks. The device is so old, anyway, that no sensible banker could possibly take real offence at it".

It remains to be seen if such statements can undo the damage wrought by over-zealous citizens who would have us believe that even Mr. Goldwyn himself is in reality Stalin's tool.

The atmosphere of fear, against which Mr. Johnston warned when the hearings began, is to-day a fact that has to be reckoned with. Men have lost their jobs in Hollywood, not because of what they did, but because of the opinions they are said to hold. If, in a single instance, the Committee could have succeeded in proving that one of these dismissed writers or directors had used his position in the film industry to undermine our form of government, and to prepare for its violent overthrow, public approval of Mr. Thomas' work would have been swift and outspoken. As it is, it remains highly doubtful that these men are Communists (which, incidentally, is no legal reason for dismissal).

How has the suspension of writers and directors affected the movie industry? Will creative workers no longer dare to make worth while movies?

No clear cut answer to any of these questions is possible. Practically everyone in the film capital has his own pet theory on the present crisis, and tabulating them all would only increase the existing confusion.

Mervyn Le Roy's prescription for escapist entertainment has found many takers. In two studios especially, both enjoying a well-deserved reputation of having made progressive pictures in the past, I have come across open cynicism, coupled with a "nobody shall find us again sticking our necks out"—attitude.

Luckily this is an extreme, and not the reaction of all the studios. The exaggeration of the charges brought against the industry has brought a slow but very perceptible stiffening of its back. Mr. Johnston's refusal to condone the hysterical demands to outlaw films which show a business man or a banker in an unfavourable light, is a hopeful sign. So is the Motion Picture Association's support of a court battle against local censorship. The Memphis, Tennessee, censor board had banned a picture because Negro children were shown attending the same school as

white children. Mr. Johnston said: "We in our industry intend to fight censorship on every front and fight it with all our resources before it becomes a serious danger to free speech and democracy".

Official statements, however, are not sufficient. A better indication whether the hearings of the House Committee have or have not gagged the industry is offered by the production schedules published by each company. And there we see that films with a deeper meaning are, with very few exceptions, conspicuously absent from the Hollywood programme.

A hush has fallen over the industry, which has found its product denounced as propaganda without being told which films have so offended. Nobody can really blame a producer for choosing the easy "out" of safe, escapist entertainment. The more honour is due to the few who continue to pioneer for a true-to-life approach to films. Their task is made a little easier by the success of *Crossfire* and *Gentleman's Agreement*. In a period of steadily-declining attendance figures, this success bears a message not likely to be overlooked lightly.

Already R.K.O., which has made *Crossfire*, is preparing *The Boy with the Green Hair*, a fantasy designed to awaken the conscience of this country to the plight of Displaced Persons. *Berlin Express*, also an R.K.O. release, is said to be centred around the one World theme.

The most heartening indication yet of the movie industry's possible change of heart has come from M.G.M., because this company was up to now the fortress of conservatism and purely escapist entertainment in Hollywood. How radical this change will be can best be surmised from the fact that M.G.M. has signed Louis de Rochemont, of *March of Time* fame, to a five-year contract.

Louis de Rochemont, who made pictures like *The House on 92nd Street* and *Boomerang* for Twentieth Century-Fox, will bring his realistic approach and technique to M.G.M., where he is slated to work first on William L. White's *Lost Boundaries*. That this film will deal with one aspect of the Negro problem in the States is, in itself, an unheard of shift of policy for Metro. In addition, M.G.M. has made public its intention to look for controversial subjects that will lend themselves to film treatment.

In spite of the attempts to censor the screen, in spite of the almost general faint-hearted retreat in Hollywood to escapist entertainment, we shall, therefore, have another crop of realistic films. Only a few, it is true, but they can offset much of the harm done by the Thomas inquiry. If they convince movie makers that the public want adult film fare, we shall have more worth-while films and less boy gets girl stories, inane musicals, Westerns and Gangster yarns. If the treatment on the screen of the struggle for social betterment sells more admission tickets, then producers will no longer ask for safe subjects but demand again good stories, and opposition from oversensitive souls crying "subversive" will be discounted. Still, the stipulation that M.G.M.'s and R.K.O.'s experiments repeat the financial success of *Gentleman's Agreement*, cannot be expressed strongly enough. This might seem a callous approach to the problem of better films. As long as we realize, however, that we are dealing with conditions as they are and not as we would like them to be, we must admit that only the continued Box Office success of the so-called controversial film can dispel Hollywood's present atmosphere of gloom, timidity and cynicism.

## THE AESTHETIC AND ECONOMIC REVOLUTION OF INDEPENDENT FRAME

By

OSWELL BLAKESTON

THE STRUCTURE OF THE FILM INDUSTRY conceals methods of production which have remained unrationised, finance which is utterly unsound, and the fact that the enthusiasm of creative workers is dissipated through frustration. But a revolution has come. It has been proved that films can be produced with stream-line efficiency and with a new aesthetic impetus, that cinema finance can shed eccentricity, that production budgets need no longer be inflated or haphazard, that film makers can meet a new challenge to renew their zest and widen their scope.

Under the economics of the revolution, one could afford to produce highbrow films for specialised houses—a prospect which should excite all lovers of cinema art. So, too, should the promise that independent frame (for that is the name of the new revolution) can at last rid the film world of the inefficient and the poseurs who use film as a means to make themselves important.

What is independent frame? It is, in the first place, a realisation that the film can be split into two elements—the artistic (story, acting, direction) which must be given greater creative freedom, and the frame element which can be isolated and so organised with maximum efficiency without damaging the artistic element.

The independent frame film calls first for thought. Genuine creative imagination must go into the film before production. Script writer, director, designer, director of sound and music, editor—all these important people can no longer rely on the vagaries of last-minute inspiration; for they must all collaborate in pinpointing details of story, composition, movement, screen size, action and setting in the preparation of a story reel.

The story reel is an inexpensive film before the film. It is an unanimated cartoon with outline drawings of the shots in the film, to which are added key dialogue, sketch music

and sound effects. With the story reel, every scene can be analysed before the unit goes on the floor. Moreover, the story reel can be shown to all members of the unit, so each technician and craftsman is aware of the shape of the final picture.

Gone are the days when the writer could see his work distorted by somebody's last-minute whims and fancies. Indeed, independent frame should attract a new batch of serious writers to the cinema, for at last a mastery of technique will be a guarantee of final results.

When the blue-print of the film has been made in the story reel, the frame is prefabricated. Precious production space is not, under independent frame organisation, occupied by construction work.

Every trick is used in prefabricating the frame—all special effects become the ordinary tools of production. Why not? The film world is one of make-believe; what argument, then, can there be against making full use of back-projection, moving mattes, miniatures, foreground transparencies, etc. And by the use of such devices it is possible to reduce the actual construction of costly settings to a minimum.

### THREE DIMENSIONS

On the other hand, more attention must be paid to the preparation of frame material than is usually the case. For instance, still plates for back-projection must be shot in accordance with the requirements of the cameraman, so there can be no argument with regard to relative exposure, printing gammas or lighting continuity. The independent frame system proposes to make the cameraman and the photographer the same person in the special category of production-photographer, who will work in close contact with the art department, as camera height, tilt, cant, the distance and scale of objects and lines of interlock, all play a part in the accurate presentation of plates.

When the action of camera or cast calls for three-dimensional building, sets are prefabricated in the assembly bay. This is any large covered area which can be erected at no great expense close to the precious studio space. The small amount of building required makes it practical to construct setting, or parts of settings, on floats which can be wheeled into the studio when and as required.

The assembly bay is equipped with racks for the storage of set pieces, property rooms, finishing shops for carpenters, plasterers, etc. The staff in the bay is known as the production service team, and production service worker is a new category which has been licensed by the unions so that now, when a team job is required, everyone can co-operate. As this team does not suffer from the interruptions which inevitably occur when construction is carried out in the studio, it can maintain a smooth flow of work. Then, before the sets are wheeled to the studio, they move past a line of service shops for final dressing.

Once the frame of a film has been prefabricated in the assembly bay and as prerecorded film or plates, etc., the cost of retakes for artistic reasons is negligible. In the case of a recent experimental film at The Gate Studio, it was estimated that approximately one-third of the total cost of

the picture was represented by the frame; so it would have been possible for the director to feel free to retake the subject at the cost of the shooting alone. Again, when the frame has been prefabricated, it can be used for several language versions.

The prefabrication of the frame is under the control of the frame manager, who works as a liaison officer between the planner, the first assistant, the director, the art department, the projectionists and the cameraman.

On the floor, everything is simplified because all equipment is mobile—spot rails, screen holders, projection towers, etc.; and many of the pieces have small power units for moving. Equipment can be positioned speedily in exact and predetermined places on the floor which is marked out by a grid system.

In the independent frame studio, considerable use is made of overhead gantry systems in order to conserve precious floor space; all equipment which is not needed essentially on the floor is taken aloft. Laterally running crabs carry overhead camera cranes, monitoring booths, sound recording equipment, etc.

And because every detail is planned and organised, there is no need for delay in discussion on the floor about mechanics. It is possible for a skeleton crew of technicians, who can converse silently through a complete system of "talk backs", to be lining up and lighting one shot while another is being taken. This eliminates one of the greatest time-wasters in studio work. Moreover, because no construction work is necessary in the studio, independent frame gives to artistes the great gift of a silent stage. At this point, film acting should take an immense step forward into realms of concentration.

Perhaps, then, this brief outline has indicated some of the vast economies and æsthetic innovations of independent frame. With independent frame technique, one stage can turn out a continuous programme of feature films. Already, at Pinewood, one independent frame stage is doing the work of five stages operating under the old system. There need now be no shortage of good films—provided the opposition of vested interests can be overcome and the psychological resistance of certain technicians be broken down. Yet the most important fact about independent frame has yet to be recorded. This is the supplanting of the motion picture camera by the television camera "so the picture can be transmitted to the laboratory where it can be recorded on film under perfect control".

At last the director comes into his own as a creative worker. He is no longer at the mercy of a cameraman who himself depends on an operator and a focus puller. With independent frame, the director is afforded instantaneous viewing of the scene. The combination of film and television technique makes it possible for the director to view, edit, mix and transfer the picture image to the laboratory for final recording on film to his proper satisfaction and under full gamma control. Such a technique, too, provides the artistes with as much continuity as required in playing a scene.

The independent frame director, then, will have to be a first class technician and a strong creative mind; for only the best men will be good enough for independent frame. And who will say this is not a revolution? and a welcome one?

# THE FILM IN PORTUGAL

*An analysis by*

ARMANDO ARAGAO

THE PORTUGUESE CINEMA may be considered as the least interesting in the world's history of cinematography. Generally speaking, all nations, even the smallest ones, which have dedicated themselves to film-making, have endeavoured to impress on their work certain characteristics to distinguish it from others, so that we recognize to-day the existence of French, English, Swedish, Russian and American styles. The reason why the Portuguese cinema has not yet found its own way is chiefly due to the neglect with which it has been treated by the official authorities, together with the lack of artistic probity and even cinegraphic sense of the Portuguese technicians and producers.

Leitão de Barros, for instance, with his *Mal de Espanha* (1918), *Malmequer* (1918), and later with even greater sureness, with *Nazaré, Praia de Pescadores* (1928), *Lisboa* (1929) and *Severa* (1931)—the first Portuguese "talkie"—seemed to be a definite hope for our cinema; he began, however, shortly afterwards to compromise and to deviate to the bad taste of the so-called "popularucho" film (i.e. films intended for the uneducated mass of the population) directing *Maria Papoila* (1938), *Varanda dos Rouxinois* (1939) and others. While he defended at the beginning of his career the creation of a Portuguese style in the 7th Art, "in order that the Portuguese cinema may mark its own position", he changed his opinion later on by saying "that one cannot think of creating a Portuguese style in cinema". It is, of course, not possible to create a school when the artist does not know what he is aiming at.

Jorge Brum do Canto, in the same way, after having directed what can still be considered the best Portuguese talkie, *A Canção da Terra* (1937) our only single film dealing with a human and realist theme, also falls into a similar compromise by directing *João Ratão* (1940), a theatrical operette, and *Ladrão, Precisa-se! . . .* (1946), a "pastiche" in the way of an American "swing" comedy. J. Brum do Canto, like Leitão de Barros, did not try to create a school, and once even expressed the opinion during a polemic that *João Ratão* was a better film than *A Canção da Terra*.

António Lopes Ribeiro—the Portuguese Pagnol—is, among all our film directors, the one who has been afforded the best conditions for turning our cinema into a serious art and industry, but, incidentally, he has been the one who has rendered it the worst services. This director and producer is chiefly a film-merchant and publicist who before selling his wares proclaims that they are the best ever made . . . Lopes Ribeiro, just like Leitão de Barros, also believed in the possibility of creating a Portuguese style, suggesting that "a synthesis of the various styles should be attempted in order that the Portuguese cinema may not throw away, through dispersion, its great possi-

bilities", and—according to our critic, Roberto Nobre, in his work *Horizontes de Cinema*—he has even gone so far as to suggest the need for "convincing all film directors that they ought to follow the same doctrine". Such an idea is, naturally, completely absurd and according to the above-mentioned critic, "Lopes Ribeiro made such a proposal knowing beforehand the impossibility of such a thing happening". And yet Lopes Ribeiro is not unacquainted with the laws that govern Aestheticism and the Philosophy of Art!

These three film-directors are, among other causes, those chiefly responsible for the low artistic and technical standard of the Portuguese cinema, as it has remained practically in their hands during these last fifteen years.

For justice's sake, we ought to mention Manuel de Oliveira whose uncompromising attitude is noteworthy, and who has endeavoured to improve from *Douro, Faina Fluvial* (1934)—the only Portuguese film which can appropriately be termed a "vanguard" film—up to *Famalicão* (1942) and *Aniki-Bóbó* (1942). Only him may we consider, with fairness, a true artist in the Portuguese cinema.

## HISTORY

After this introduction which we consider necessary in order that the case of the Portuguese cinema may be better understood, let us turn to the leading subject of to-day's article. The historical outline that we are going to draw is more descriptive than critical in character, and we shall only deal with the Portuguese cinema up to the 1st International Festival held at Cannes in September, 1946. It is likely that this date may mark the beginning of a new era—which seems unlikely to be better than the previous one, as we will try to show—on account of the new bill for the protection of our cinema which has been passed to the National Assembly before being definitely approved.

The first steps of our cinema were most hopeful as Portugal was one of the very first countries in the world—after France, England, and Germany—to produce films. While the Lumière brothers present us with *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière* (1895) and Gaumont *La Sortie des Usines Panhard et Levassor*, Aurélio da Paz Reis presents us in Portugal, at Oporto, with *Saida dos Operários da Fábrica Confiança* (1896), and later with *Chegada dum "americano" à Foz do Douro*, *Jogo do Pau*, *Feira da Corujeira*, and *O Fandango*. Like Pathé (Charles) with his *L'Arrivée du Tzar à Paris*, *Défile de Chasseurs à Cheval*, etc., Costa Veiga, in Lisbon, also presented—from 1899 to 1907—his *Aspectos da Praia de Cascais*, *Regresso dos Soberanos da sua*

*Viagem aos Açores, Tourada à Antiga Portuguesa, Exercício de Artilharia em Belém, and the visit to Portugal of Edward VII, Wilhem II, Alphonse XIII, etc.*

During the period 1909-1912 the first story-films appear, the most important being *Os Crimes do Diogo Alves*, of João Correia, and *Rainha depois de Morta*, which incidentally was also the first screen version of the tragedy of Inês de Castro. During the first World War all activity came to a standstill, but the period from 1918 to 1924, however, may be considered the golden age of our cinema owing to the founding of the Invicta Film. This brilliant period—so surprisingly ignored by all historians—sets an example to our directors of to-day and tomorrow of how they can achieve a high standard in film production. As it is obviously impossible to produce good films without expert technicians and artists, the partners of Invicta Film did not hesitate to call foreign technicians to Portugal. George Pallu, of French nationality and Rino Lupo, an Italian, were the first directors of production in the studios at Oporto. To this period belong *Rosa do Adro* (1919), *Os Fidalgos da Casa Mourisca* (1919), *Amor de Perdição* (1920), *Quando o Amor Fala* (1921), *O Destino* (1922), *O Primo Basílio* (1922), *Cláudia* (1923), *A Tormenta* (1924), all directed by G. Pallu. Invicta also produced *Mulheres da Beira* (1921), directed by Rino Lupo, *Tinoco em Bolandas* (1922), by António Pinheiro, etc. Caldevilla Film, and Fortuna Films, in Lisbon, also gave their contribution to this period with *As Pupilas do Senhor Reitor* (1922), directed by Maurice Mariaud, a Frenchman, *Sereia de Pedra* (1922), by the French lawyer Roger Lion, *O Rei da Fôrça* (1922), by Ernesto de Albuquerque (who the previous year had directed *A Morgadinha de Val Flor*), *Os Olhos da Alma* (1923), by Roger Lion, *O Fada* (1923), by Maurice Mariaud, etc. It is during this period that the best Portu-



*Pupilas do Senhor Reitor*

guese silent film was produced, *Os Lobos* (1923), adapted and directed by Rino Lupo. The screen-story of this film, taken from a play by Francisco Lage and João Correia de Oliveira, was admirably treated by this Italian director, who was able to give to it a high artistic and technical standard of a truly international class. It must be noted that nearly all the cast was formed by students of the cinema school, under the guidance (both in Lisbon as in Oporto) of Lupo, and that the photography of Artur da Costa Macedo greatly contributed towards the value of the film, by giving it a plastic value which can be matched with other great film productions.

The period from 1925 to the appearance of the first Portuguese talkie *A Sévera* (1931) has little interest as to quality of output, in comparison with the previous one. The only fact worth mentioning is that it is during this period that certain names appear which are still connected with the Portuguese cinema, such as Aurélio Rodrigues and António Lourenço who directed *A Mão Enluvada* (1927), António Lopes Ribeiro who directed his first film *Bailando ao Sol* (1928), Chianca de Garcia with *Ver e Amar* (1930), the revelation of Leitão de Barros in *Nazaré, Praia de Pescadores* (1928), *Lisboa* (1930) and *Maria do Mar* (1930), Raúl Faria da Fonseca with the film in silhouettes *A Lenda de Miragaia* (1931). To this period also belong *Fátima Milagrosa* (1928), and *José do Telhado* (1929), both by Rino Lupo, *A Castelã das Berlengas* (1930), by João de Sá, *A Portuguesa de Nápoles* (1931), by

Henrique Costa, and in which Manuel Luís Vieira distinguished himself as cameraman.

Leitão de Barros was the first film-director to try his hand at the talkie, with a film, *A Severa* (1931), which still lies above the cinematographic value of the great majority of Portuguese films, and which was taken from a work with the same title written by Júlio Dantes. The photography was by Salazar Diniz and music by Frederico de Freitas. Cottinelli Telmo's *Canção de Lisboa* (1934) was, however, the first talkie to be entirely produced in Portugal, at the studios of the Companhia Portuguesa de Filmes (Tobis) founded in 1932. In 1934 were produced two of the best Portuguese films, *Gado Bravo*, directed by A. Lopes Ribeiro under the supervision of Max Nossek—and in which also worked Lippchitz, architect of the UFA, Eric Phillipi, screen writer, and Henrich Gaertner, as cameraman—and the vanguardist documentary *Douro, Faina Fluvial*, by Manuel Oliveira, with photography by António Mendes. With the exception of these first Portuguese talkies our sound-film is indeed of rather low quality. Nothing has been done in this field except the repetition of themes previously dealt with by the silent film and which are generally of low technical and artistic value; there are, naturally, some exceptions but they are so few that they hardly count at all. During these eleven years of activity up to September, 1946 there only appeared three films with some relative value: *A Canção da Terra* (1938) of Jorge Brum do Canto, *Ala-Arriba* (1942), of Leitão de Barros, and which won a medal in the X Biannual of Venice—a documentary which belongs to the "Naturalist (Romantic) Tradition" according to Paul Rotha—and *Aniki-Bóbó* (1942) by Manuel de Oliveira, and these three films are the only ones which may be selected as worthy of mention out of some 30 films, which were produced during that period by the Portuguese studios. *As Pupilas do Senhor Reitor* (1935), by Leitão de Barros was newly filmed, as well as *A Rosa do Adro* (1938), by Chianca de Garcia, *Os Fidalgos da Casa Mourisca* (1938), by Artur Duarte, *Amor de Perdição* (1943) by A. Lopes Ribeiro, *Fátima, Terra de Fé* (1943), by J. Brum do Canto, and *José do Telhado* (1946), by Armando Miranda. During this period the following films were also produced, *O Trevo das quatro Folhas* (1936), directed by Chianca de Garcia, *Revolução de Maio* (1937), by A. Lopes Ribeiro, *Bocage* (1937), by Leitão de Barros, *Aldeia da Roupa Branca* (1938), by Chianca de Garcia, *Maria Papoila* (1938), by Leitão de Barros, *A Varanda dos Rouxinóis* (1939), by Leitão de Barros, *Feitiço do Império* (1940), by A. Lopes Ribeiro, *João Ratão* (1940), by J. Brum do Canto, *Pão Noso* (1940), by Armando Miranda, *Porto de Abrigo* (1941), by Adolfo Coelho, *O Pai Tirano* (1941), by A. Lopes Ribeiro, *O Páteo das Cantigas* (1942), by Francisco Ribeiro, *Lobos da Serra* (1942), by J. Brum do Canto, *O Costa do Castelo* (1943), by Artur Duarte, *Ave de Arribação* (1943) by Armando Miranda, *O Violino do João* (1944), by Brás Alves, *A Menina da Rádio* (1944), by Artur Duarte, *Um Homem às Direitas* (1944), by J. Brum do Canto, *A*



*Aniki-Bóbó*

*Noiva do Brasil* (1945), by Santos Mendes, *A Visinha do Lado* (1945), by A. Lopes Ribeiro, *Caes do Sodré* (1945), by Perla, *Sonho de Amor* (1946), by Carlos Porfírio, and *Ladrão, Precisa-se! . . .* (1946), by J. Brum do Canto. Portugal has produced very few documentaries worth mentioning, except those we have already referred to directed by Leitão de Barros (*Nazaré, Praia de Pescadores, Lisboa, Maria do Mar, Ala-Arriba*), by Manuel Oliveira (*Douro, Faina Fluvial, Famalicão*), by A. Lopes Ribeiro (*Bailando ao Sol*), and by João de Sá (*Alfama*). At present only Adolfo Coelho, who works at the cinema department of the Agriculture Service of the Ministry of Economics, is producing documentaries. His activity is in fact worthy of notice as he has already produced some rather good documentaries such as *A Vida do Linho*, *Nasceu um Menino* and *A Vida das Abelhas*.

On the educational film there is nothing worth mentioning.

In conclusion, it seems that the path followed by the Invicta Film pioneers should have been adopted by those who have dedicated themselves to film production in Portugal, as "it is necessary in order to have a Portuguese Cinema to be fully prepared with the necessary conditions to ensure the production of films without interruptions and with security, with sufficient value to be enjoyed abroad, and with their own characteristics without, however, endangering their universality. All this naturally demands the existence of real production bodies, with authors, actors, and the various specialized technicians who may find in the cinema a worth while profession . . .".\* Without this being first attained, the Portuguese cinema will continue aimless, lacking favourable conditions for development and with only 200 picture theatres operating in Portugal and two studios, one of which is incomplete.

\* "Amebições e Limites do Cinema Português," by Manuel Azevedo Cadernos "Seara Nova", 1945.



Rome : Publicity Cycles for *BLACK NARCISSUS* (*Narciso Nero*)

## CELLULOID AMBASSADORS

*An account, by an Executive of Eagle-Lion Film Distributors Ltd., of the present position as regards British Films abroad*

EACH TIME we send a British film abroad we send something of ourselves. Films are our celluloid ambassadors.

We had precious few such ambassadors before the War. *The Private Life of Henry VIII* was one, but it is hard to think of any others. Not because no good pictures were being made in Britain then, but because we had almost wholly neglected their overseas distribution. British steel, British woollens, British ships—the world knew their quality. But the world did not know the quality of British films for the simple reason that the world had scarcely seen them. Hollywood sat four-square on the global film market.

J. Arthur Rank put his finger on this crippling weakness in the British film industry—the lack of adequate distribution not only abroad but also at home. In those days finance was attracted by the glamour of the studios—the promise

of easy money without working for it, the prestige of being associated with some great picture. Mr. Rank saw no prestige in any picture, great or small, which was immediately crowded off the screens by its American competitors. He set about tackling this formidable and totally unglamorous problem of distribution.

I do not intend, in this article, to deal with the past or to describe how—step by rapid step—the British film industry has established itself alongside that of Hollywood during the past ten years instead of trailing dismally behind . . . What is the position of British pictures in the world market to-day? “The British film industry”, Mr. Rank has said, “has grown up to be increasingly aware of its responsibilities in human relations. We now have the vital facilities of production, distribution and exhibition, and a proper flow of equipment, which were all sadly lacking in



Batavia: *TAKE MY LIFE* at the Globe Theatre

the pre-War years". By and large, this means that to-day there is hardly a country anywhere which does not see British pictures, and see them not as some alien freak overshadowed and outclassed by Hollywood productions, but as pictures in their own right, fixing not only new and high standards in entertainment but bringing with them a breath of England—our scenery, our architecture, our way of life and, most important of all, our own selves. It is on the screen that the people of the world can meet us.

There lies one of those "responsibilities in human relations" of which Mr. Rank speaks—the British film industry's responsibility of presenting Britain fairly and truthfully to the millions who not only want, but ought to know, more about us if this country is to maintain her place as a world influence.

#### INTERNATIONAL "NATURALS"

Clearly, countries must differ in their film tastes—though every now and again a picture has been found to hit a common denominator of appreciation. *Henry V*, for example, *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, *Great Expectations* and (in the less expensive, less spectacular type of production) *The Seventh Veil*—all these were "naturals" wherever they have been shown abroad. But let us rather go from country to country and see just what are their various film habits, as they affect the British industry.

Scandinavia has proved to be an excellent market for British films—and will continue excellent so long as their quality is maintained. For Scandinavian audiences take an intelligent interest in the cinema and are selective in their choice of films. Good pictures are well received, but there is little mercy for poor ones. In Sweden the censorship authorities come down on brutality, murder or insanity, but they are very liberal about sex problems, and amorous scenes generally. Swedish filmgoers are eagerly following the British career of their own star, Mai Zetterling, who, having been introduced to us in *Frieda*, is to make more

pictures in this country. In Finland tastes tend to be serious. Directors are nearly as important as stars, and artistic and literary pictures make a particular appeal. *A Matter of Life and Death* went well in Finland.

#### WESTERN EUROPE

Western European countries, especially Holland and Belgium, insist on a high standard of production, acting and story. American competition is strong—as it is bound to be in countries which were deprived of American films during the war, since cinemagoers want to catch up on the five years of pictures they have missed, as well as see the current productions. The same applies, of course, to British films but Hollywood's output being so much greater than ours, the Americans have had very many more films to show. Now, as the 1940-1945 pictures disappear from the cinemas, the Americans and ourselves are settling down to a fairer division of screen-time in these formerly occupied countries. Moreover, the popularity of British pictures has been heightened by the personal appearances of such stars as Stewart Granger, Greta Gynt, Patricia Roc and Trevor Howard, while much goodwill has been gained in the Low Countries by last year's visits to England of parties of Dutch and Belgian critics and film writers. They came here as guests of the Rank Organisation to study, and report on, the British film industry at first hand. This is one instance of the friendly relations maintained with the foreign Press which, for its part, treats British films most fairly. Particular attention is always given here to the comments of foreign critics since they are a very useful guide when future productions are being planned with an eye to the foreign market.

#### CENTRAL EUROPE

Last year saw the beginning of a steady and increasing flow of British pictures to countries in Central Europe, notably Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and the British and American Zones in Germany. *The Overlanders*, *The Magic Bow* and *Great Expectations* were marked box office successes. The last two, no doubt, met that urge for art and culture in the cinema which is characteristic of the Central European countries. *The Magic Bow* with Paganini its central figure, being a serious musical—and not only in Central Europe but elsewhere on the Continent was this film commended for the excellence of its musical background. Good musical backgrounds are immediately appreciated by the sensitive Continental ear; for this reason alone have British pictures risen in the esteem of filmgoers across the Channel. *The Seventh Veil*, with Eileen Joyce's background piano playing, is another example. In Poland, where the State Film Corporation is now accepting British pictures for regular distribution, *The Seventh Veil* was singled out for overwhelming praise. "No words of approval are too great for it" was a remark echoed in nearly all the papers when it was seen in Warsaw late last year.

In Czechoslovakia, the State Film Corporation has been working closely with Eagle-Lion. We hope for a wider showing of British films in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. The Government of Yugoslavia, which sees the cinema largely

as an instrument of education, exercises a strict control over the type of film imported. Preference is given to documentaries and "shorts" dealing with technical subjects. For features, Yugoslavia looks to screen versions of well-known historical novels and serious musicals.

In the Mediterranean countries, and in the Middle East, there is a different mood—films here must have action and glamour. Egypt's most popular film of 1947 was *Caravan*. So widely distributed are British pictures in this part of the world that our producers are considering dubbing them in Arabic so that they shall reach the largest possible audience. Wider still is the distribution of British films in India and Pakistan, though here again, recent political events and the withdrawal of the British administration may cause a setback. Technicolor films are a special delight to Indian audiences. I myself have seen the enthusiasm with which *Henry V* was received in Bombay. Further East, in the Malay Peninsula and China, the language difficulty crops up again. The main appeal must therefore be visual—a film with plenty of action goes best, and again they love Technicolor. In the big cities, however, there is always an educated public for the more artistic and serious productions.

In what must these days be described as the older Dominions—Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada—lies the readiest opportunity for British films overseas. Films from home—especially those showing the British way of life—can be as welcome as a letter from home; indeed, for many, they take the place of letters. Here are ready-made audiences who, in the past, were just waiting for British pictures. The excellence of many of our wartime productions roused them to the fact that they need wait no longer and now—since they and we have many tastes in common—a successful film in England automatically repeats its success in the Dominions, especially now that the Rank Organisation is putting a girdle of its own cinemas round the earth.

In Canada alone, forty-four J. Arthur Rank productions are due for release this year.

This brings me to the Western Hemisphere, for obvious reasons the toughest nut which the Rank Organisation has



Athens: King and Queen of Greece leaving Gala Premiere of *GREAT EXPECTATIONS*

had to crack. Filmgoers in both North and South America, and especially in the United States, all of whom have been brought up on a Hollywood diet, have inevitably been slower to appreciate the work of British studios. But in the past year such fine pictures as *Odd Man Out*, *Great Expectations* and *Stairway to Heaven (A Matter of Life and Death)* have brought home to these audiences that we can equal and surpass the best from Hollywood, both in entertainment value and technical quality.

During the same twelve months, eighteen feature films from the Rank Organisation were distributed in the United States; box-office receipts classed eight of them as "outstanding". Rather surprisingly, romance does not make a first appeal to the Latin Americans. They want action and thrills and (in Brazil) colour and music. Dickens, too, delights them. *Great Expectations* and *Nicholas Nickleby* are firm favourites while, for action and drama, *Odd Man Out* has been one of the most successful films ever shown in South America.

In this article I have laid the emphasis on the overseas reaction to British feature films. I must conclude with a word about those great assets of the industry—the documentary and news reel films. There is no better way of spreading a country's ideas and culture over the rest of the world. *This Modern Age*, with translated commentary, is beginning to be shown on the screens of many nations. Reports already indicate its popularity, and there is general admiration for its impartiality and the clean-cut construction of its films. *This Modern Age* is among the most persuasive of our celluloid ambassadors.



Berlin: Premiere of the Royal Wedding Film

# THE QUARTER IN BRITAIN

By

ARTHUR VESSELO

THE FLOW OF BRITISH FILMS is becoming perceptibly more rapid, but one has the uneasy impression that the increase in quantity is being accompanied by a degeneration in the standard of quality. The films of the present quarter include a number of stock romances and melodramas, a solid dose of unpleasantness, a sprinkling of comedy, one or two notable achievements in the way of powerful bathos, and almost nothing that is more than mediocre. It is possibly worth remark that nearly half the total of films issued in the period have been costume-pieces.

Perhaps the most interesting development is the growing supply of children's films. The Tatler at Christmas-time had a three weeks' season of children's programmes, changing weekly: all the films shown had been made for Children's Entertainment Films, and the programmes contained coloured cartoons, travelogues, magazines and features of varying lengths. There is no question about the praiseworthy nature of the effort, which deserves every encouragement; but, after proper applause, it may be time to venture a little criticism.

There is, of course, a danger in adult criticism of children's tales. To look for sophistication in such a context, whether of technique, plot-construction, or tempo, is to mistake the audience and the purpose; but it can still be asked whether the simple, the cheerful, and the harmless are quite enough. There is something of a negative atmosphere about certain of these films; they are just a little colourless, a little lacking in imagination, in true creative force; and they are sometimes too far from life without being near enough to fantasy. It is probably much too early to be disappointed because brilliant insight into the child-mind is not yet greatly in evidence. Time and experience will no doubt help to evolve a genuine tradition. Meanwhile, what has been done has its own value.

Of the adult films—the classification, one hastens to point out, is in basis purely formal—the one which seems to lay most claim to reasoned analysis is Duvivier's version of *Anna Karenina*. Not that this is any sort of a masterpiece; but it has suffered from one or two mild injustices. For example, the unfavourable comparison with the Garbo version is quite unfair. Apart from the fact that the earlier piece had Garbo in it (which is admittedly a feather in any film's cap), and that it was made a long time ago (which gives it the weight and dignity of age), it was unmemorable, and had rather less feeling for Tolstoy than the newer film. That is another point: it may be true that in the present film the period background is at times a trifle unconvincing; it may be true that Vivien Leigh is not the ideal Anna and that the unfortunate Kieron Moore is about as much like Vronsky as Clark Gable was once like Parnell; but it must be said emphatically on behalf of justice that there are at least moments when the film really captures the authentic Tolstoy spirit. They are far less frequent than they ought to be, but they stand out here and there: the horse-race,

presented almost entirely through the reactions of the spectators in speech and expression, is an excellent instance.

There is some attractive photography; and Ralph Richardson's Karenin is admirable. The big failures of the film are in continuity and motivation. The attempt to compress has produced the usual patchwork, including scenes with only the dimmest explanation of their place in the sequence; and the motivation for Anna's behaviour towards her husband, for the most part superficial, is now and then exceedingly obscure. The true meaning of the story comes through in flashes only—such a flash is the scene of Anna's humiliation at the opera. For the rest, the social-psychological implications have been largely lost in the transition from novel to screen.

## BURLESQUE, BATHOS . . .

Another novel whose passage to the screen has hardly improved it is F. Anstey's *Vice Versa*. There is no particular connection between this and *Anna Karenina* except their period flavour; but whereas Duvivier in dealing with Tolstoy has tried faithfully to recreate the past, Peter Ustinov in dealing with F. Anstey has concentrated purely and simply on burlesque—on the principle, it would seem, that what people did fifty or so years ago is bound to look killingly funny from the atomic eminence of our superior modern age. The validity of the joke is in any case dubious since F. Anstey's original idea of a schoolboy changing places with his pompous father through a magic wish was already funny enough in its own right without this annihilating cross-current. Mr. Ustinov is a very clever young man—that is obvious—but he runs a risk of appearing a little over-facile.

In fact, there does not seem to be much need to go out of one's way to burlesque the past, since films of the past so often and so successfully burlesque themselves. There is on the one hand the dull type of frightfully romantic historical film, like *Mrs. Fitzherbert*, full of synthetic Pitts and Foxes and Georges and excruciating sentimental *longueurs*, entirely empty of verisimilitude or atmosphere, so that one wonders why such a film was ever made: and on the other hand there is the shattering idiocy of an *Idol of Paris*, laid in a fantastic Second Empire that never existed nor could exist—of which it may be said with feeling that one knows only too well why such a film was made, since it is cut to a very definite box-office pattern.

*Idol of Paris*—which, to be properly appreciated, should really be seen in an undergraduate town in term-time—is so bad, so ringingly and echoingly false, that one pauses over it in fascination. It is about a *demi-mondaine* who is in reality pure as the driven snow—and to what bizarre and unlikely lengths do the makers not hasten in order to prove their point! The dialogue sparkles. "But you're the new

Queen of the Half-World, my dear," (uttered in a tone as much as to say, "But you're the new Queen of the May") is a characteristic high-light. The heroine sweeps austerely through the film, chin up, looking in her more dramatic moments astonishingly like Cicely Courtneidge.

#### ... AND BAD TASTE

*Idol of Paris* is certainly good for a laugh. That cannot be said of Marc Allegret's *Blanche Fury*, which left the present reviewer with a singularly nasty taste in his mouth. The *Weltanschauung* behind this efficiently-produced Technicolor spectacle of fate, great mansions, murder, passion and arson in the nineteenth century is sinister in the extreme. Nor can it be explained away on the alleged basis of a realistic (if pessimistic) materialism, for the whole point of the thing seems to lie in the repeated references to 'Fury's ape', an overpowering supernatural influence of a specially grisly kind. The true moral to be drawn from this type of tale, one may suggest, is that when God goes out at the door, little gruesome devils have a way of scurrying in at the window.

A curious experiment in what might be called the quasi-costume-drama is *Corridor of Mirrors*, which is set in the 1930's but harks back, with a good deal of woolly talk about re-incarnation, and with the aid of a masked ball, to the Italy of the Borgias or thereabouts. The film is a tribute by Miss Edana Romney (who collaborated in script and production) to Miss Edana Romney (glamorous new star). The story is told by flashbacks over a period of seven years, helped out by first-person commentary, and the dialogue consists of a string of pseudo-literary clichés. Eric Portman as the reincarnate (?) Renaissance lover starts off as an apparently hypnotic villain but ends up as quite a nice chap after all, despite the presence of his effigy in the Chamber of Horrors. The film as a whole is schoolgirlish in conception, and Miss Romney might be well advised in the future—if she will not take it too hard—to stick to acting and leave it to others to bring out her talents.

#### STANDARD FORMULA

Flashbacks and commentary (first-person and otherwise) figure largely also in Harold French's *My Brother Jonathan*, from a novel by Francis Brett Young. Here they serve to build up the narrative of a doctor's early professional struggles in a Midlands slum-district, and of his concurrent romantic trials, as recounted by him to his adopted son, just returned from our latest war. The theme and its treatment belong to an easily recognizable class, and, while worthy elements may in places be noted, the film opens weakly and has in sum no special distinction of approach. With all the valuable local material that the Midlands offer us, it seems a pity that the best we have been able to do so far is to concoct a standard Midlands formula. However, the formula as such is not absolutely and entirely off the mark, and it may contain the seeds of something better.

Underground activities in occupied Europe during war-time provide the theme of the Ealing film *Against The Wind*, directed by Charles Crichton. There is some feeling for action here, and consequently some lively excitement. It is difficult to see whether anything much more was intended. If so, it does not quite come off; if not, then the film—apart from certain structural weaknesses—does an effective job within its limits.

In these days a quarter can seldom go by without some excursion or other into the realms of spivvry and hooliganism. Of that category is *Night Beat*, an uninspired and unelevating piece about black-marketeers, night clubs, murder, and vice in general. Of that category, too, is the more competent *Brighton Rock*, produced and directed by the Boulting Brothers from Graham Greene's novel. To those who object that the film-makers have failed to capture adequately the spirit of the book, it may be fairly replied that the separation is by no means clear-cut, since the novelist was also part-author of the script, with Terence Rattigan. Something palpable has been lost in the translation, certainly, including important parts of the explanatory background, as might be expected; but the essential spirit is not greatly changed, and it is frankly unattractive. The tale is a sordid one of razor-slashing racecourse gangsters in Brighton between the wars, and the atmosphere is chilled and over-hung by a mood of craven fear and disillusion. The film is technically well-made, so that at moments it comes within measurable distance of the kind of melodramatic action where horrors and violence are caught up and transcended in a peculiar screen-catharsis; but the bleak depressionism of the total attitude is too much for any such tendency, and misery, not *misericordia*, is the moral.

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## THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

### FILM APPRECIATION SUMMER SCHOOL, BANGOR, 1948

THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE'S Summer School in Film Appreciation will be held again this year at Neuadd Reichel, University College of North Wales, Bangor, from Tuesday, August 10th to Tuesday, August 24th.

The School is designed to give a survey of the fundamentals of film technique and history; as in previous years, mornings will be devoted to lectures by film technicians on the main divisions of production, and lectures and discussions on the teaching of film appreciation, and the evenings to the showing of relevant film programmes; the afternoons are free periods.

The number of places is limited, and applications will be dealt with in strict rotation.

Full details from The British Film Institute, 164, Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.2.

# WHAT'S WRONG WITH DOCUMENTARY?

By

WINIFRED HOLMES

IS THERE ANYTHING WRONG with documentary in this country? Has the great fulfilment—not promise, but fulfilment—of the war years not been maintained? Have we lost our proud position of supremacy in this field of film-making? Frankly, I think we have, and my recent visit to Denmark has convinced me of this sad fact. There I found that those very warm admirers of our earlier documentaries are feeling a growing sense of disappointment at the films we have made since the end of the war. They find them lacking in spirit, inspiration and new techniques and they are looking to other producing countries for evidence of a living tradition.

What, then, is wrong with British documentary? This is not a question which can be answered in a few words—a simple phrase. That would be to falsify a highly subtle and complicated issue. There will be as many opinions on it as there are people who care about it, and I put the following forward in all humility as being only one of a number.

Before the war, documentary was moving in several directions, each of which had its own special vitality and potentialities. There was the *reportage* documentary which quickened its pace and heightened its overtones into a state of poetic intensity, such as *Night Mail*; there was the documentary of ideas: *We Live in Two Worlds*. And there was the story documentary, *North Sea*. These three main methods of presentation shown in these particular G.P.O. Film Unit films, were also being applied with success by other directors working for other companies. A healthy balance was normally kept between concentration of interest on subject matter and presentation technique, although there was a tendency already to consider the content as being of greater importance than how the film was made. Therein lay a threat to quality which has manifested itself now.

The war found the documentary movement ready for its urgent demands, adult enough to accept the big responsibility thrust upon it and able to rise to true greatness. All three types of treatment were employed, although the story documentary was perhaps the one which paid the biggest dividends, except for *World of Plenty* and *Listen to Britain*. The themes were "naturals", action stories of people temporarily doing their stuff as soldiers, airmen, firemen, seamen, factory workers or just a motley crowd of assorted civilians living and working in extraordinary circumstances and in constant danger—heroes and heroines in spite of themselves. Their very ordinariness gave a tang and spice to the extraordinary circumstances in which they were placed. It would be grossly unfair to say that directors could hardly go wrong with such themes; rather it should be said that they made the most of them and rose to their occasion.

Moreover, documentary profoundly influenced the feature film, creating a new reality in film-making which has saved much of the British industry from its pre-war artificiality of production. Some people go as far as to consider that in doing this documentary has fulfilled its function

and may now die a quiet death in an obscure departmental corner. This is emphatically not my opinion; documentary has its own importance as a medium of film-making and in the feature documentary there are possibilities which may well absorb the gifts and energies of some of our best directors. That is to say, the old story documentary on a larger scale with actuality, not fiction, for story, but with the dramatic tensions needed to hold popular attention and with a mixture of real people and actors where they are needed to sustain a long emotional part. The prototype is, of course, *The Overlanders*.

But that is the future: why is British documentary to-day disappointing to our friends in other countries, if not to ourselves? There are, I think, several reasons.

The first is that the stimulus of the war was an artificial one, forcing documentary into an over-important position, giving directors opportunities which they could not have in peace, opportunities to spread themselves over a larger canvas and to win appreciation from the many as well as from the few. Every artist likes appreciation, and not merely from a minority which tends to make him feel divorced from the life of the community as a whole—the unfortunate position most poets find themselves in to-day. So by the end of the war, several of the directors whose work had reached a peak and a maturity in one of the big war films went into features to continue to find this wider scope. Others had been forced into producing and administrative posts—jobs which needed doing, but which largely prevented them from making the new documentaries of peace.

For while film may be a group art, in which team work counts and the ideas of several may be better than those of one, the individual genius of a director will always tell. Every fine film is the work of an outstanding director and since the war documentary has lost some of its best directors. Some are forced out by the economic situation; some seek a wider scope; others believe that the conditions governing the sponsorship of documentary to-day are not auspicious, citing not only high production costs and the decline of industrial sponsorship, but also the committee system adopted by the Government which tends to kill initial enthusiasm and to blur the original clear outline of the film.

So there is one reason for what is wrong with documentary: the loss of most of the best senior directors. Their loss has not yet been made up for in spite of the success of more recent comers who are making good films. The increased amount of production has meant that people have been forced up into directing before they have had the long apprenticeship they need in other branches of film-making. Many of them are men who, having held senior rank in the Services, bring gifts of trained intelligence and organising ability, but not necessarily that special sense which makes a first-class director, and usually without the humility which sends them contentedly working in a junior position to learn the feel of film-making. And too often they look on documentary production merely as a step to feature production. To the original pioneers this would

have appeared as heresy of the worst order, believing in documentary as they did, with a mystical and self-sacrificing faith which, though mysterious and perhaps maddening to those outside, yet did triumphantly create the film.

Then, too, the movement has grown too big and unwieldly to provide the nucleus of enthusiasm which centred before the war round the various pubs in the Soho Square neighbourhood. Documentary, no longer fighting for recognition from all but the initiates, but being courted by authority and industry, grew complacent. It also became de-centralised and the mushroom growth of independent producing companies set up to meet the swollen demand, split it up into many groups working in comparative isolation rather than the old sharing of a common working interest and an argumentative comradeship.

Younger people coming in with eagerness, after seeing the classic documentaries and reading the sagas of the good-old-days, found a blank where they expected keenness and were led to feel that the movement they had believed in with proselytizing zeal was nothing but a commercial racket, riddled through with internal dissensions, personalities and politics. Now the creation of British Documentary will fill the void and will give them just that sense of belonging to something with ideals, something that matters, that they so badly need. The return of John Grierson will also have an effect. No one can predict exactly what, but the atmosphere is sure to be charged once more with excitement, enthusiasm and controversy; it will be alive.

Another reason for a lack of originality and fire in present-day production is the enormously increased cost. This is making experiment almost impossible. Sponsorship, wary of chancey new ideas of presentation, must have its money's worth of propaganda for so high a cost. To keep within budgets and meet high overheads producers are forced to curb the more adventurous spirits on their staffs and to play safe, cutting down on quality, on just that extra sequence or piece of experimental sound which may raise the film into another class artistically. It is easier to play safe with mediocrity. The Treasury seldom recognises special circumstances to allow for additional budgeting, so that producers are in a strait-jacket.

What of the films themselves, other than the circumstances in which they have to be made and the fact that only a few of them are being made by first-class directors? Have they any faults in common? Are there any flaws on which one can put one's finger?

To my mind, their chief fault is one of omission. They are highly competent, but they lack fire, wit, spirit. They are, in fact, dull. But not all. *The World is Rich* is anything but dull, but that is an outstanding film of the ideas type, made by an outstanding director. *Cumberland Story* is not dull, although I think it inferior to Humphrey Jennings' war films. *Cotton Comeback* points the way to a successful and human presentation of propaganda. *A String of Beads* is lyrical and tender and human. *The Centre*, too, is human and has the virtue of unity in style. The Crown Film Unit's Malayan film has breadth and vision and courage. But these are exceptional; the rule is worthiness, dullness, nothing you can criticise, nothing you can pin down; but the effect is tedium and you wonder why the film was ever made.

Yet there is one serious vice in present production which can be pinned down. It is the mixture of styles and techniques used far too often in the same film. Contrast *Industrial Britain* with *Five Towns*—both well photographed and the latter with a fine sound track. Yet *Industrial*

*Britain* is compelling; it has a sweep, a romantic quality, a unity of style and presentation which makes it satisfying to-day. *Five Towns*, for all its virtues, has no such compelling quality, it has no unity. The directors of *Industrial Britain* knew what they were doing and they did it right through the film. *Five Towns* begins in one style, goes into a totally different one, and ends in another. There are as many documentary techniques and ways of presenting subjects as there are subjects, but having decided upon one, it is essential to stick to it and so give the audience that sense of inevitability which is art. No painter could successfully employ several techniques in one picture—Impressionist, Fauveist, Realist, Surrealist.

"Behind every English writer is an invisible pulpit"; in contemporary documentary the pulpit is not even invisible, or if it is not the pulpit it is the lecture rostrum or the schoolroom blackboard. To be an ardent social reformer is one thing when it moves a film artist, like Rotha—Dickens was no less a writer for his burning moral indignation on behalf of the poor and the down-trodden. But when such zeal is all the director has he should leave films and take up some form of social service. If he is a pedant and has into the bargain a feeling for film-making, let him make first-class educational films; otherwise, let him help to swell the all-too-thin ranks of the teachers in the modern secondary schools.

As well as a lack of spirit, fire and wit, there is too little real humanity about most documentary to-day, too little heart. The documentarist should have the Innocent Eye of the true painter; he should not attempt to impose his idea of the person, thing or problem but come to it with humility, striving first to understand it from within and then to find the best way in which to make it reveal itself most completely. To illustrate this: suppose a film were needed on the old people of these islands, how should a writer or director set about creating a film which would really light up the problem from within? First, he should find out what it is like to be old by getting to know as many old people as possible and getting to know them intimately: old people outside institutions; old people in them. Only when he really comprehends as well as a young person possibly can what are the secret treasures of the old and what the sensitive and frightened places will he be ready to go and look at the provisions made for these old people, the Homes and Unions, and examine the proposed reforms in that light.

Setting about it the other way round; going to look first at the institutions and talking to the inmates from the outside, as it were, would not only be a useless piece of social investigation but would produce a dull, *public* film, a piece of dreary propaganda, instead of a fresh and exciting work of art which opens new doors into truth and understanding.

In the Rest Centres of East London during the blitz, one came across old people who had lost everything—their rooms and their precious little store of possessions. They were alive; they were warm and fed and well-looked after, but in their eyes was death. With their possessions went their identity, their hold on the shadowy world of memory. Those verities are more difficult to discover in peace than in the shameless nakedness of war, but they are there to be discovered. And in the discovery lies the way to a new level of sympathy and the making of films which are not only valuable pieces of social documentation, but fine works of art.

## TWO MASTERS

ERNST LUBITSCH AND SERGEI M. EISENSTEIN

By

H. H. WOLLENBERG

FILM IS STILL A YOUNG ART. It is an absorbing craft. It takes total possession of its disciples. Of course, I am not speaking of those who, from their place at the conveyor belt, fulfil their allotted function in the process of putting entertainment on to celluloid. I mean those few creative personalities to whom we have to be grateful that, within only 50 years, the new device of optical and sound recording could rise to a novel art form. It is futile, where film is concerned, to try and separate industry, technique and art; they are here indissolubly combined. The creative artist of the film is thus in a far more exacting position than the painter or the composer or the poet. He finds himself with his intuitions and visions inescapably involved in the technicalities of the studio and the laboratory, in the claims of finance (whether state or private) as regards production costs, available capital and exploitation returns.

Once we recognise all this, we will not only admire all the more the faith, idealism and devotion of the great film directors, but will understand more easily how completely the cinema monopolises its creative artists. To accomplish what they have, they have actually got to be "made of celluloid", as one of his friends once said of Lubitsch. Small wonder that their energies are exhausted more rapidly by this sort of life and work. Two of them who left indelible traces in the history of film art, nay, who were instrumental in creating the art of film, testify this: Ernst Lubitsch passed away towards the end of last year; Sergei M. Eisenstein followed him early in February, 1948. The former reached only the age of 56, the latter hardly that of 50.

At first sight, they appear almost complete opposites: Eisenstein will be remembered as the creator of works revolutionary in both subject and technique; Lubitsch, in the first instance, as the master of fine screen comedy, produced with superb taste. He represents what would be described as "Bourgeois Aestheticism" in Moscow.

Although—or possibly because—they seemed to belong to different worlds an attempt may be timely to compare their work now that it is completed, their achievements and their personalities, to review their particular contributions to the film and to consider the place they have won for themselves in the history of the cinema.

It would be interesting to speculate on the possibility of a meeting, a discussion between these two—the man from Berlin who, before turning to the stage and later to the studio, began his professional life in the paternal clothes business and the engineer's son from Riga, himself starting out as an architect and engineer before taking up stage decor under Meierhold, then producing at the Proletkult theatre and eventually finding his way to film direction. Unfortunately, that discussion never took place; at least, that is, not in the physical and personal sense. I did, however,

have the good fortune to be present at a kind of "impersonal" encounter between the two. The occasion was when one of them was for the first time confronted with the work of the other. It was Ernst Lubitsch's first visit to Berlin since he had left for Hollywood. He had, so he told me, heard a great deal about a young Russian director and his film *Battleship Potemkin*, and was now anxious to view it. Since it was not showing at any of the cinemas at the time, a private viewing was arranged. Lubitsch and this writer were the only persons to be present. He watched the film in complete silence, apparently fascinated by what he saw. Even after the film was over, and the lights had come on again, he still sat in silence, almost as if holding his breath. He, a creative artist of the cinema, the master who had startled the world with his *Madame Dubarry* (Passion), suddenly saw himself confronted by a work of art the powerful effect of which he felt without, as yet, being able to determine its style, so foreign to his own. What he felt he summarised in one brief remark which hit the nail on the head: ". . . but this film isn't pictorial. It looks like news-reel".

The essential and novel in Eisenstein's masterpiece was thus clearly and exactly defined. In an imaginary discussion with Lubitsch, Eisenstein could, on his part, only reply: "Thank you, Lubitsch. I could wish for no greater recognition than your judgment, since it confirms that in my film I have achieved exactly that which was my artistic aim . . .".

### A CHALLENGE

The style of a work of art is determined by the artistic purpose of its creator. This obvious fact, which in all other arts is considered commonplace is, curiously enough, often overlooked with regard to the film to which it should particularly apply. From the beginning, Ernst Lubitsch's idea of film was strongly influenced by Max Reinhardt's stage productions, which revolutionised the theatre of that time. The young Lubitsch had begun his artistic career as a comedian in Max Reinhardt's theatre. He saw how in Reinhardt's productions of Shakespeare plays the classic, long since dead, came to triumphant life, how a world of make-believe and dusty backcloths was transformed into a new reality of beauty and poetry. The influence of these impressions remained the determining factor in his conception of film art; he translated, he adapted it from the stage for the language of the moving picture. The *Potemkin* film was necessarily a challenge, the glove thrown at his feet. It was not "pictorial". Deliberately not pictorial. Since Reinhardt had initiated him into the art, Lubitsch

had always deliberately strained after the pictorial. Film for him meant picture in the sense of the painter. Only his tools were not brush but camera, his instruments not palette, canvas and paint-box, but actors, sets, lights and arc lamps. If film must be art, then it must be picture, must be pictorially composed. And that was his, the director's task; cultured taste, beauty his means and his end.

We will find proof of this if we analyse the picture which won him his place in film history : *Madame Dubarry*. The handling of light and shade, of space, the relationship between decor and men, the architecture of mass movement, the choice of camera-angles, the rhythm of camera movement—it all can best be summed up in the words, "pictorial composition". However, there was another outstanding feature by which *Madame Dubarry* stirred its contemporaries: a feature just as characteristic (or perhaps even more characteristic) of Lubitsch's individuality—the acting under his directorship. Here again we meet the inspiration of Max Reinhardt. He had revived the classical drama, not least Shakespeare, for 20th century spectators by doing away with the traditional bathos of a stilted and unnatural histrionic style. The characters in his productions again became the real human beings as the dramatists had conceived them originally. A similar renaissance was encouraged by Lubitsch in screen acting. That rolling of eyes, those grandiose gestures, that unnatural, stilted miming which was so typical of the period films of the time, and which makes them so involuntarily funny to-day, was completely abandoned in *Madame Dubarry* and replaced by a natural and at the same time pictorial, in other words, cinematic manner of acting. This again was integrated with the scenery in an entity, a "pictorial" composition. All this easily explains that and why Lubitsch's encounter with Eisenstein's *Potemkin* film should have come almost as a shock.

#### THE DIFFERENT APPROACH

It is noteworthy that the two films by which Lubitsch and Eisenstein made film history were closely interlinked with revolutionary events and changes in their respective countries. *Madame Dubarry*, with its background of the great French revolution and its climax of the guillotine coincided with the overthrow of the Prusso-German monarchy. Eisenstein's *Potemkin* film told the story of the naval mutiny which was preliminary to greater revolutionary events; and it was directly inspired by the Communist revolution of 1917.

Here, however, ends any similarity between *Dubarry* and *Potemkin*. In fact, they emphasise the different approach of their respective creators most distinctly. Lubitsch was concerned with individuals. He was interested in individual human beings and in their most perfect interpretation through the cinema; persons who happened to be a former King of France, his mistress, and so on. The revolution to him was the *background* on to which those characters were projected. To Eisenstein revolution was *foreground*. Revolution to him was the essence of his film, the purpose of its making. It is the real "star" of the story.

Lubitsch wanted to interest us in his characters; Eisenstein, the ardent Communist and ex-Red Army soldier, in revolution. Their means, their styles were bound to differ accordingly. In point of fact, Eisenstein had to create a new style for a purpose which was absolutely novel to film making. For films had so far been made more or less to entertain, certainly not for revolutionising audiences.

Only recently a pamphlet by Kiryll Burkovsky on the history of thirty years of Soviet documentary film was published by the Society for Cultural Relations with the U.S.S.R. Herein we find some interesting information on the trends that influenced Eisenstein originally. Soon after the revolution a youthful group had banded together around the highly-talented director, Dziga Vertov, who developed their own philosophy of film aesthetics. They called themselves "Kinokes" (an abbreviation of kinema and oko, which means eye), and their ideal was the absolute film. They repudiated a story, because stories are borrowed from literature; they repudiated acting because it is borrowed from the stage. Their aim was to purge film art of all alien elements and to discover through the camera nothing but the rhythm which is immanent to the movement of objects.

#### HYPNOTIC STYLE

Dziga Vertov, as we know, eventually gave up the pure gospel of this theory and turned to feature films. However, you discover the essence and the influence of this new school of film thought in S. M. Eisenstein's *Potemkin* film. There were, of course, a story and a script—and what a brilliant one—and there was acting, and shrewd directing of individuals as well as masses. But Eisenstein's purpose was to make you forget altogether that there was a script, and actors and actresses and directors. He wanted you to witness, nay, to live the *Potemkin* mutiny. To this end he had to devise a new style. For, what Lubitsch would have called "pictorial" could possibly remind you that you were sitting in the cinema, watching a re-enacted drama. This would not be the ideal psychological situation for the revolutionary shock and stir intended by Eisenstein. Eisenstein wanted to hypnotise you into watching the actual events, incidentally caught by the lense of the camera. It had to look "like news-reel", as Lubitsch put it. The spell emanating from Eisenstein's technique is probably the greatest effect that the cinema can achieve. Thus, the *Potemkin* film was revolutionary not only in its subject, but also in its technique, and an achievement of historical importance.

It is almost forgotten that Lubitsch, too, went out of his way and for once used the film medium to impress his own outlook upon the audience. It was his film *The Wildcat* (*Die Bergkatz*, 1922) and its tendency was anti-militarist. The artistic means he adopted for this purpose were, however, completely different from Eisenstein's. *The Wildcat* was a parody on militarism. The wildcat of the title is the daughter of a robber chieftain, living high up in the mountains against whom war is being waged. In ridiculing militarism, Lubitsch here made use of expressionistic methods. *The Wildcat* stands at the beginning of a type of

film satire, the most recent example of which is Ustinov's *Vice Versa*.

#### SUPERFICIAL PARALLEL

A further fundamental difference in the cinematic styles of the two can be found in the visual technique of their films. The rhythm in Lubitsch's films is determined by the continuously moving camera, which—from shot to shot—is virtually the story-telling organ. On the other hand, Eisenstein—and, for that matter, the Russian school of film making, with Pudovkin as its main theoretician—may well shoot a number of static objects with a static camera and create rhythm by their combination or "montage". We find this technique even more conspicuous in Eisenstein's later work, where he developed it from a means almost to an end in itself. *Ivan the Terrible* is conspicuous by its heavy, slow moving, almost static technique. Confronted with *Ivan*, Lubitsch would have to reverse his opinion of Eisenstein based on *Potemkin*. It is "pictorial" in the extreme. It is, far from the realism and collectiveness of Eisenstein's earlier works, deliberately stylised, "composed", individualistic, and very near to surrealistic techniques. From the striking difference between the style and technique employed in the *Ivan* trilogy and that employed in his earlier films, the difference of purpose becomes transparent. We hardly recognise the creator of *Strike*, *Potemkin*, *Ten Days that Shook the World* and *The General Line*, in other words, the films interpreting and glorifying the Communist revolution and the Soviet Union. With Eisenstein turning for his subjects to history and patriotism, the altered style becomes already discernible in *Alexander Nevsky*.

Here again appears a certain, though superficial parallel between Lubitsch and Eisenstein. In both cases, there is a distinct change from their earlier to their later productions. Just as Eisenstein turned from the topical to the historical, so Lubitsch, who had once made his great entry with monumental period films like *Carmen*, *Passion*, *Sumurun*, *Deception* (*Anna Boleyn*), *The Loves of Pharaoh*, stuck to sophisticated comedy ever since sound had conquered the screen.

#### FOREIGN INFLUENCE

Lubitsch achieved the reputation of the leading director of the early 'Twenties on account of the international success of *Madame Dubarry*, a success which had its climax when, in 1923, he was called by filmdom's First Lady, Mary Pickford, to Hollywood, to make a film with and for her. Eisenstein, too, owed a great deal to foreign response. The then People's Commissar of the Soviet Union, A. V. Lunacharsky, himself wrote about *Potemkin*: "In Russia, the full revolutionary force and the novel technique of this brilliant film fragment were not immediately appreciated. It was only from the German echo that we were able to

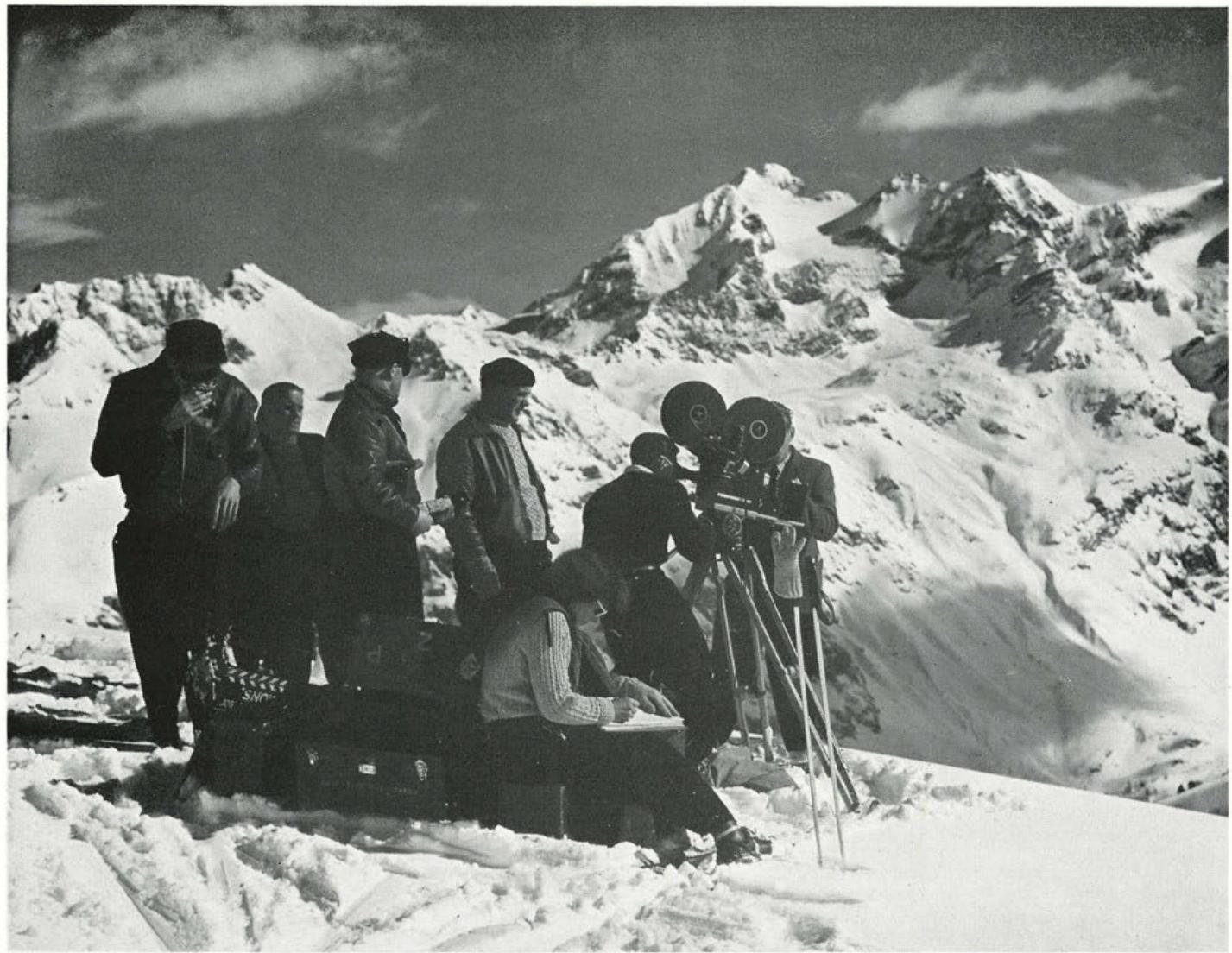
recognise the progress of our film art". It was the time when such fellow critics as Leo Hirsch, Rudolf Arnheim, G. F. Salomony, S. Kracauer, Ernst Blass, Hans G. Lustig, Kurt Pinthus, Heinz Pol, Willy Haas and many more reviewed films in the German press.

As different in type, origin, outlook and purpose as the two men were, one feels that they had one most important thing in common: both were creative, and the fact that they both died early is, one feels, more than a merely incidental and superficial parallel. As we have seen, the creative artist of the film is liable to struggle harder, and to consume his energies sooner, than any other artist. For the realisation of his visions, his efforts in self-expression, are tied up with financial premises, the painter, the composer, the poet, the writer may after all freely choose their subject. Can the artist of the film . . . ? Whether he depends on a board of directors or on a state bureaucracy—he is certainly not a free agent, and there are certain limitations even for such prominent men as Eisenstein and Lubitsch.

#### SOVIET CRITICISM

In a recent issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, an interesting contribution by Eisenstein was published dealing with Hollywood in a devastating criticism. No doubt, Eisenstein's shrewd critical mind saw the shortcomings of the Russian production system just as clearly, although he never voiced such opinions and obviously could not do so. More than a year ago, when the news came that Eisenstein had entered a sanatorium because of heart trouble, rumours connected this with harsh criticism in the Soviet press of his latest work; it was alleged that he had been ordered to discontinue with the third part of his *Ivan the Terrible* films. Whether this is true or not, whether it has some connection with his early death or not we do not know. But Richard Winnington, of the "News Chronicle" is probably right in saying in his short obituary notice of Eisenstein that he was lately "chivied, in company with his fellow-pioneers, by cultural bureaucracy". One recalls the recent castigation of Soviet composers for ideological failures and "decadent" work by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet.

Lubitsch, at first sight, seems the far more fortunate case, who had found the formula for coming to terms with Hollywood on the basis of box-office at the least possible concessions to his sophisticated taste and artistic manner. No complaining articles of his have ever appeared. However, was he quite as happy as he seemed in all his splendour? We know one remark of his, which is characteristic of his wit: "We, in Hollywood, acquire the finest novels in order to smell at their covers". The one sentence betrays that he lived and worked in Hollywood not without seeing its shortcomings with open eyes. However, Lubitsch was no revolutionary. As far back as in 1930, a Berlin film critic commented on Lubitsch's famous cigar that, "unfortunately, it was not smoked in Moscow instead of Hollywood". Looking back now that the cigar has gone out for good—I wonder if the critic was really right. . . .



Production still from Sydney Box's SNOWBOUND

R.K.O. Radio

## THE GRIFFITH CONTROVERSY

Editor, *Sight and Sound*

DEAR SIR,—In the Autumn, 1947, issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, Mr. E. L. Cranstone attacks D. W. Griffith, *The Birth of a Nation*, and myself for replying to Peter Noble's previous attack along the same lines. Mr. Cranstone vilifies Griffith, likening him, after the fashion made familiar by Communist smear tactics, to Hitler and Mussolini; he also distorts certain statements which appeared in my "Reply to Peter Noble", *SIGHT AND SOUND*, Spring, 1947.

On behalf both of Mr. Griffith and myself, I request an opportunity to answer these falsehoods and political distortions, point by point, as follows:

1. "In his (Stern's) opinion Griffith is the Master and could therefore have done no wrong." This is rubbish. Nothing in my "Reply to Peter Noble" or in any of my other writings on Griffith justifies this petty accusation. I am well aware of the failures and limitations of

Mr. Griffith, both as a human being and as a director. I have repeatedly and severely criticized him—(see my articles of 1926 and 1927 in the New York "Sun" and the New York "Herald-Tribune")—and shall continue to do so, for what I consider his more serious mistakes as well as for some which are in my judgment hardly even forgivable. I believe I may also know the fundamental and tragic cause of his decline. However, I do not consider that *The Birth of a Nation* was one of Griffith's mistakes, nor do I feel that anything in this film exemplifies some of the alleged "wrong-doing" which Communist fanatics and their partisans have imputed to it. Perhaps I am wrong, but if I am, the error will have to be proved to me. This has not yet been done, and meanwhile, the religiously political garbage dumped on the subject by self-styled critics and "historians" such as Peter Noble, Lewis Jacobs and Mr. Cranstone, more than ever convinces me that I am right.

2. Mr. Cranstone terms "dogmatic" my assertion that Griffith's depiction of the American Civil War and the Reconstruction Period in the South possessed a "degree of authenticity, documentation, objectivity, and scholarship seldom if ever equalled on the screen". He adds: "How many interpretations are there of history?"

It does not matter how many interpretations there are. The point is, that Griffith's interpretation is based on the facts and on the facts only. It seems that even Mr. Cranstone suspects this, for he is unable to make more than a token and very feeble effort to get around it: in the next sentence he complains that I make "much of a book called 'The Clansman,' in which Griffith put so much faith that he even called his picture by that name when it was first shown." Doesn't Mr. Cranstone know that the personal narrative of *The Birth of a Nation* was taken from the romance in Thomas Dixon's novel, "The Clansman"? Can it be that he expects Griffith to apo-

gize for titling his film after the book on which it was based? How silly! (Note: *The Birth of a Nation* was originally and for about one year called *The Clansman* in Los Angeles and environs only. This was before it opened at the Liberty Theatre, in New York City, several weeks after the Los Angeles run began, under its new and permanent name. See Griffith Index: Part II, *The Birth of a Nation*.)

Dixon's book may be tenth-rate literature, but it was and remains a mirror of the life and people and the temper of the South during the dark days of Reconstruction; it is unimpeachably accurate. Although its romance had popular appeal, its chief value is that of a social document. Mr. Cranstone ignores all this, and not really knowing whether the historical material and spirit of the book are authentic or not, drags in a generalized, undocumented criticism of it by Gilbert Seldes together with some guesswork and derivative opinions by Bardeche and Brasillach in their "History of the Film"—the history in which Thomas H. Ince of all people emerges as the "great American director" . . .

#### KU KLUX KLAN

Mr. Cranstone then proceeds to dismiss the original Ku Klux Klan (1868-1871) as "that vile body of terrorists formed by the dispossessed slave owners"—a matter of opinion, at best. To bolster the charge, he exhorts the "young film students", whom he appears anxious to sway, to read "Freedom Road", an "account" of the Reconstruction Period, based on isolated and obscure incidents, by Howard Fast, an American writer recently cited by Congress for concealing the records of a Communist-front group.

Mr. Cranstone writes: "For the authenticity of his account, Mr. Fast cites a list of historical material now lying in American National Archives, such as 'The testimony of the Joint Select Committee to inquire into the condition of affairs in the late insurrectionary States'—thirteen volumes in all", and similar sources. What he omits to state is that much of the material in Dixon's "The Clansman", and still more of the material in *The Birth of a Nation* itself, is drawn from precisely the same source! The book extensively used by Griffith in filming Dixon's novel was the 592-page volume of the Joint Select Committee's testimony relating to the condition of affairs in North Carolina. (Govt. Printing Office: 1872). (Note: although the main action of Part II of *The Birth of a Nation* is laid in South Carolina, many incidents and bits of "business" in this part of the film were taken from the record of events in the northern state. The reason for this is, that while essentially the same types of incident occurred south of the state-line, certain events that occurred in northern Carolina were thought by Griffith to be more filmable). According to Mr. Cranstone, however, when a contemporary Communist writer bases a lurid propaganda novel on governmental source-material,

the result is "authentic"; but when Griffith, treating of the same subject, bases *The Birth of a Nation* on the identical material, the result is "anti-racial bias". All this is typical concealment and deception.

#### NO FAULT OF FILM

3. Mr. Cranstone claims that by my own admission *The Birth of a Nation* "started riots". I made no such admission. I wrote that riots accompanied or followed the film. I have never denied that its effect on the Negro people has been extremely damaging. (So has been the effect, quite probably, of "The Merchant of Venice" on the Jews. Was Shakespeare thereby an anti-Semite?) But who began the riots is another question. Recently, *The Birth of a Nation* in a cut version was revived at the Republic Theatre, across the street from the old Liberty, where it first played, in Times Square, New York City. Communist partisans tried in various ways to foment a riot. No riot ensued. But suppose it had: would this then have been the fault of the film?

4. Similarly, the fact that its exhibition has been banned by the Museum of Modern Art Film Library proves nothing. Almost everyone today knows where the political sympathies of the Film Library lie; the devious extra—"educational" activities of this outfit in the field of political propaganda are as well known to film students as they are to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. As a matter of fact, the Film Library was obliged only recently to send its print of *The Birth of a Nation* to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which ran the film on the night of Sunday, September 14, 1947, at the Academy Award Theatre, Hollywood, before 1,100 spectators.

#### NEGRO PLAYERS

5. Mr. Cranstone sneers at my explanation of Griffith's use of white players in black-face to portray most of the Negro roles. Actually, Griffith used many Negroes in the climactic scenes, including one Negro lady, in particular, Mme. Sul-Te-Wan, who began her acting career as a stock player under seven-year contract to Griffith, and who remains to this day one of his cherished friends. It was not I, but all-knowing Noble, who stated that *The Birth of a Nation* had no real Negro players, because Griffith wouldn't employ them. Mr. Noble, basing his wild assertions on that "authoritative", Film Library-endorsed compendium, *The Rise of the American Film*, naturally "knew" this . . .

6. My reference to Peter Noble as an actor in one of Clifford Odets' rabble-rousing plays was not Red-baiting, as Mr. Cranstone tries to make out, and as anyone can see for himself by reading the "Reply to Peter Noble". I merely cited it as the reason for believing that Mr. Noble should

have been more familiar than he appeared to be with the techniques and tricks both of playwriting and propaganda, when he accused Griffith of "maligning" the Negroes by dramatizing historic actualities. I did not state or imply that his having acted in an Odets play made Mr. Noble a "Red" or a "Stalinist". This idea emanates from Mr. Cranstone, who was apparently taking a chance that by the time his attack against me was printed, the contents of the "Reply to Peter Noble" would have been conveniently forgotten by the "young film students".

7. Mr. Cranstone asks: "Just because Griffith is famous for his contributions to the art of the cinema, are we also to accept his ideologies?" Certainly not. There is no more reason that we should accept the ideologies of D. W. Griffith (whatever these may be) merely because he is the father of film art than there is that we should accept those, say, of Eisenstein, Dovzhenko or Pudovkin, merely because they are masters of the Soviet screen.

#### NO COMMUNISM

8. Finally, Mr. Cranstone assures his readers (as if he knew!) that I have a "hatred of anything savouring of the progressive". This is libel. Come off your Red horse, Mr. Cranstone! I believe in the economic, intellectual, political and social progress of mankind, but I do not want this progress under the auspices of the Communist Party and the Soviet dictatorship. If by "progressive" you mean something equivalent or similar to the Communist blueprint of the Soviet police-state, you are right in calling me anti-progressive. But if you mean by progressive the standard definition of this term as used by non-Communist democrats throughout the Western world, then you are mistaken.

I mentioned in the "Reply to Peter Noble" my support of Federal anti-lynching legislation in the United States. In addition, I also support other militantly pro-democratic and pro-liberal policies, including severe punishment for any person or group of persons proved guilty of fomenting "anti-racial bias" or inter-religious hatred. But you no doubt have only contempt of this, since such a program, put into effect without benefit of Stalinist clergy and without the end-result of a Soviet state, would leave the Stalinists holding the bag. My position is very simple. I believe in the widest degree of liberal democracy, and by the same token I am opposed to every form of totalitarianism—totalitarian economy, totalitarian politics, totalitarian religion, totalitarian thought and culture in general.

To paraphrase Mr. Cranstone, Stalinism is "loathsome to true democrats, in the United States as in every other part of the world."

SEYMOUR STERN

Los Angeles  
California

[This correspondence must now cease—  
Editor, SIGHT & SOUND]

# ANATOMY OF THE FILM

*A Book Review by*

JOHN HUNTLEY

THE LITERATURE of the cinema has been considerably advanced over the last ten years in this country, helped no doubt by the corresponding advance in the standard of British films themselves, which has tended to give the British writers more incentive to enter the world of cinema book production. There have been countless books about the stars of the screen and about the stories used in films. There have been quite a number of technical publications on the arts and crafts of film-making as a job. There has been a group of scholarly works on the aesthetics of the cinema.

The beauty of Mr. Wollenberg's new book\* is that it combines all these categories and puts them into their correct perspective. It fills a great gap between the highly specialised treatise and the popular, well illustrated, but superficial type of work; and it does this with complete integrity. Starting with an excellent foreword by Oliver Bell, we are given an interesting introduction on "The Phenomenon of Film", which leads into well planned sequences on the history of the cinema, the fundamentals of the film, and so on, taking into concise consideration such subjects as film style, sound in films, production methods and the influence of the film on the conduct of the world. An attractive feature of the book is the use of facts and figures, which are, nevertheless, kept in check until Mr. Wollenberg reaches a chapter devoted to his special *tour de force*, film economics—and what a feast of fascinating facts it is!

The book is lavishly illustrated, and this greatly enhances its value as the book on film appreciation for every school library and college bookshelf in the country—which, indeed, should be its destination, apart from its value to all serious students of the cinema in whatever walk of life they may be. One does feel, however, that the stills have not been selected with the same care as the textual matter, and one wonders to what extent an author of such a book does in fact control the selection of the photographs. A shot of Charles Frank directing *Uncle Silas* for the front cover of a guide on film appreciation, for example, seems a most unfortunate choice, when the director in question has only made

one film so far, and that a film which seems to be almost universally considered indifferent. However, Robert Krasker accompanies Frank on the cover, and his work in *Henry V*, *Brief Encounter* and *Odd Man Out*, amply justifies his prominent position. Phases of movement make an interesting set of pictures, but should they not have been grouped together? A still from *Fame is the Spur*, on page 28, is described as "Shooting: close-up with lighting"; but surely all shots need lighting, whether close-ups or not. A comparison between a 1917 and a 1945 production of *Cæsar and Cleopatra* is extremely good, but the film types on page 39 seem badly chosen. Simone Simon has done so much good work in French films that to describe her as the "dark vamp" (with the implication of type casting) seems a little unfair. Having seen Anne Crawford in *The Master of Bankdam* and *Daughter of Darkness*, to designate her as the "sentimental blonde" also seems wrong. A set of photographs to bear out the statement that "children are the best actors" is attractive; a section of the script for *Henry V* contrasted with the same scene from the play, and the reproduction of a call sheet for *Duel in the Sun* is intensely interesting. On page 88 there is a still of "Geoffrey Foot, editor of Cineguild's *Take My Life*, viewing a sequence through the moviola", but Mr. Foot only has a strip of sound-track and nothing at all in the picture gate, which is seen to be open and completely inoperative!

These digressions, however, have no bearing on the book as a whole. With its well-chosen speeches by Sir Stafford Cripps, the clear logic of Mr. Wollenberg's reasoning, the smooth development of the narrative and the carefully selected facts and figures, "Anatomy of the Film" is a very worthwhile addition to cinema literature.

\* "Anatomy of the Film", an illustrated guide to film appreciation, based on a course of Cambridge University Extension Lectures, by H. H. Wollenberg. (Marsland Publications, 1947, 10s. 6d.)

## THE NEW BOOKS AND PERIODICALS

**Les Pionniers du Cinéma, 1897-1909,**  
by Georges Sadoul. (Editions Denoël,  
1947.)

In two volumes, of which this is the second, Georges Sadoul has now brought his history of the cinema only as far as 1909. A work on such a scale is not merely unusual in film literature but, at least in this particular branch of it, almost unique. For the early history of the cinema usually receives no better treatment than, on the one hand, an introductory chapter in a more general work, which attempts to summarise without taking the trouble to do the groundwork; or, on the other hand, a popular book of reminiscences (usually described as a "Romance" or "Cavalcade") which, no more complete or accurate than the former, chats complacently about the quaint old days and tells the well-known anecdotes about ramshackle penny shows and amateurish production, with a general conclusion that the film pioneers were jolly fine chaps.

Such books, of which there are already quite enough, represent the only form of history that the world could ever hope to

know were it not for the energy and devouring interest of the few real historians who take endless trouble to ascertain as much as they can about their own particular subject. In the case of the cinema, the lack of material is formidable, and its collection and interpretation requires all the devotion and conscientiousness of which the research worker is capable. As Georges Sadoul points out, the difficulties of tracing the history of the pioneering days of 1896 to 1910 or thereabouts are greater even than those he experienced in completing his first volume on the former period, that of invention. For the story of the inventions, if only because it has been the cause of endless and bitter controversies, has been well documented. Thus although the evaluation of the various claims may be difficult, there is at least no shortage of material. With the beginning of the industry, however, interest turns from the apparatus to the films themselves. This is especially important in the case of M. Sadoul who, himself an important critic, naturally shows greater interest in the film as an art than as either an industry or a

social phenomenon. Like the historian of the theatre or the ballet, in so far as he seeks to do more than record the development of an organisation or its place in society, the film historian is impeded by having no original work to take off a shelf or to visit in a museum and thereby to form a new critical judgment.

Certainly the film historian, particularly when dealing with the later years, is more fortunate than the historian of the theatre in being able to see at least some representative films and, for this purpose, M. Sadoul has searched in the film archives of several countries including our own National Film Library. But so few of the films of these first twelve years have been preserved that even together they hardly give grounds for safe generalisation and certainly not enough to establish once and for all the most important contributors to the development of film technique. But no one who is so deeply attached to the film as M. Sadoul can contemplate its history and remain entirely without interest in such development. The only possible solution, and that employed in the present book, is

an extremely careful compromise. From the few films left, from chance observations on style and technique in contemporary books and periodicals (and especially in the trade press), from the detailed descriptions and synopses in the film dealers' catalogues, the historian can build a picture of the whole and evaluate the contributions of the different people and "schools". The memories of veteran pioneers, who still live, are an additional and lively source, which has to be treated with even greater caution. The film catalogues of the period are themselves very hard to find and, among others, the British Film Institute's own collection, gathered together for similar research, was made available to M. Sadoul.

The results of this method, in the hands of a scrupulous observer such as M. Sadoul, are better than might be supposed, but no one knows the dangers and difficulties of his method better than the research worker himself. It is hardly possible to quarrel with the method in this case, however, although there is room for argument in the conclusions. Is it justified, for instance, to give "De Méliès à Pathé" as the alternative title for a history of world cinema? Then again, while the chapter devoted to the writer's own particular discovery, "the Brighton school", is undoubtedly admirable, the date given for the decline of the early English cinema could perhaps bear some re-examination. But the first results of a piece of original research such as this are rarely the last word on a subject, but are acknowledged—above all by the author—to be the rough sketch which much welcome correction and investigation will gradually perfect. M. Sadoul points out, in fact, that he has already begun the revision of his first volume. The important thing is that it is only when a writer like this undertakes the vast labour of covering the ground that these controversies and modifications can take place. The "Romances" and "Cavalcades", which repeat similar fragments over and over again, are amusing. But a work such as the present volume adds something entirely new to the total of recorded history.

RACHEL LOW

**Magic Shadows: The Story of the Origin of Motion Pictures**, by Martin Quigley, Jr. (Washington, Georgetown University Press, 1948. 3 dollars 50 cents.)

This is a popular account of the historical development of the precursors of cinematography and it has many of the defects of a popular approach which may, to begin with, provoke a sense of hostility in some readers. For example, one constantly encounters the somewhat clumsy term, "magic shadows art-science", pieces of irrelevant information are occasionally interpolated in a manner suggestive of garrulosity rather than scholarship, the attitude to the past is sometimes naïve (as, when referring to the intellectual achievements of the Arabs, the writer comments, "To-day it may be difficult for some to attribute intellectual advance to a people often associated in the common mind with desert life and crudities of camel transport"), and the touchstone of achievement constantly referred to is modern Hollywood. Nevertheless, despite these minor irritations, one is left at the end with admiration for the immense amount of

research which the author must have undertaken, and gratitude to him for the first thorough and systematic review of a field which has in the past encouraged so much glib romancing. Archimedes, Roger Bacon, da Vinci, Porta, Kircher, Musschenbroek, Plateau, Uchatius, Langenheim, Marcy, Muybridge, Friese Greene, Edison—all those, it would seem, who have made the slightest contribution to the projection of photographed movement, are here, and the assessments of their work all appear to be sound. The book is excellently illustrated, and is provided with two appendices, a chronology and a bibliography of sources and a detailed index.

ERNEST LINDGREN.

**Cine Frances: Origen, Historia, Crítica**, by Manuel Villegas Lopez. (Buenos Aires, Editorial Nova, 1947.)

This is an excellent book. It is comprehensive, detailed, perspicacious, well-written and, while eminently readable, valuable as a book of reference. It has minor faults: there are a number of typographical errors in the spelling of foreign words and names, the photographs, though well chosen and well grouped, might be better reproduced. More serious is the lack of an index, a surprising omission in a book of this character and one which should certainly be rectified in the next edition.

But none of this affects the merits of the book itself. The author has a wide acquaintance with French culture in all its forms and is able to relate the cinema to its contemporary art and literature. The subtitle indicates well enough the scope of the work. *Origin* takes us back to the drawings of primitive man and then considers the cinema as springing from the dominant influence in each country—in Germany the Wagnerian myth; in Russia, ballet and the plastic arts; in America, journalism; and in France, literature. *History*, the long middle section which forms the bulk of the book, treats the French cinema in detail from 1895-1945. The author follows his subject from the first successes of the Lumière Brothers, past the spectacles of Abel Gance and the first retrogressive sound films to their flowering in that delicious blend of realism and fantasy which is the work of René Clair. There is scarcely a French film of any note which is not treated individually and in the best chapter of all (The Apogee, 1934-1939) he deals with the work of the great directors, passing with an equally sure touch from the intellectual realism of Clair to the poetic realism of Duvivier, the strict realism of Feyder, the naturalism of Renoir and the neo-naturalism of Carné. In the last sub-section he deals with the work of the French directors in exile in Hollywood and elsewhere. *Criticism*, the final section of the book, touches on more abstract themes, the quality of French thought, the insistence of liberty of mind, the clash between melodrama and authentic realism. The book concludes with a bibliography and a short statistical and technical section on French studios and manufacturers of apparatus, film base, etc.

It is a far cry from the cave drawings of Altamira to *Le Corbeau*, but the journey is direct—one might almost say "as the crow flies"—and full of interest. It is a

thousand pities that the Spanish text will debar so many people from reading it. Who will give us a translation?

NORAH LEWIS.

**Histoire du Cinema Americain, 1926-1947**, by Pierre Artis. (Paris, Colette d'Halluin, 1947. 210 frs.)

It is a pleasant surprise, at a time when American films are being so fiercely attacked, to find that a French author has tried to do justice to what the United States has contributed in the sphere of the cinema: after all, the Americans have provided some of the best sound films.

M. Artis has written his history in a quite unusual manner. He does not try to analyse the film in any new way, but to treat the subject as if he were engaged in a conversation with a friend. The method is indicated in a preface by Jean-George Auriol, which is written as a dialogue: Do you remember this . . . and that . . . and so on.

By this process, the author, instead of treating the history chronologically, groups the films in chapters under such a variety of headings as: Parade of laughter, The conquerors, Pictures of life, and so forth. This sometimes gives very surprising results as, for instance, when the author mentions *The Lost Horizon* in the chapter, Parade of laughter.

It is a very entertaining book and it reminds one of many good films, which is a pleasure. Of the various types of film, M. Artis prefers the gangster variety and Bette Davis is his favourite among screen actors and actresses. He has been hampered to a certain extent by the limited number of American films to be imported into France since 1940. Moreover, it is difficult for a reader who is not French when films of nationalities other than French are given with French titles. It would be a very good plan if authors of books on the cinema all over the world would agree to give the titles of films in the original language, followed perhaps by a translation in brackets in the language in which the book is written.

The book has a good index and is rather sparsely illustrated by reproductions of stills from both silent and sound films.

RAGNA JACKSON.

**Pictorial Continuity**, by Arthur L. Gaskell and David A. Englander. (New York, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1947.)

Almost every owner of a cine camera will, at some time or other, want to make a picture about his summer holiday, his baby or his hobby. How much more interesting these films would be and how much more exciting to make, if their producers observed the principles outlined in this book.

"Pictorial Continuity", which is intended for beginners or for amateur cameramen with a little experience, sets out to describe the rules to be observed when photographing a simple story. It is clearly written and every important point is driven home with emphasis.

There are very few general rules which can be applied to an art as complicated as film making, but the authors have done their utmost to classify them. In the process a certain amount of over simplification is inevitable. Nevertheless, the beginner would benefit greatly by adhering to these

rules, whilst remembering that each generalisation has probably a hundred exceptions.

"Pictorial Continuity" is written by people who obviously thoroughly understand their job, and who have arrived at their knowledge the hard way; there is no patronising note in this book, a fault which could easily have crept in.

Altogether this is a useful addition to the library of any amateur who wants to know how to make *films* as opposed to producing a string of animated snapshots.

PETER PLASKITT.

**Dirty Eddie**, by Ludwig Bemelmans. (New York, Viking Press, 1947. 2 dollars 75 cents.)

This novel gives the impression that the author has sketched a group of characters into the background of a fabulous Hollywood studio, given each of them individual reality, and then, having no set plan, has left them to develop their own theme. The fascination of this theme, as it evolves, lies in its cynical humour. It is, however, disjointed and the thread is sometimes entirely lost in a bewildering mass of people and ideas.

"Dirty Eddie", a little black pig who makes good the hard way and defies nature to do it, is the lovable hero, with whom acquaintance is all too brief.

DAPHNE TURRELL.

**Everybody's Movie Course: 20 Simple Lessons in Movie Making**, by William C. Eymann. (New York, T. J. Maloney, 1947. 50 cents.)

This little book, which originally appeared as a series of articles in a magazine, should be useful as a course for the beginner and as a pocket reference book to the more advanced amateur. It is fully illustrated by diagrams and reproductions of photographs.

**My Studio Sketchbook, introducing 36 Famous Stars of the British Screen**, by Emil Weiss. (Marsland Publications, 1948. 6s.)

These sketches seem to vary very much in recognizability. It seems almost impossible to establish the identity of some of the faces; on the other hand, some are almost photographic. However, they all seem to be executed with dexterity.

**Lexique Anglais-Français**, by Henry Piraux. (Paris, Nouvelles Editions, 1946. 90 frs.)

This useful little lexicon of technical terms is divided into two parts, the first being English-French, the second French-English. These terms include those rather slangy words which have now become, by use and wont, part of the language of cinematography. The book also includes tables of English units of measurement converted into decimal units.

**Bird Watching**, by Stuart Smith (2s.). **Britain's Airlines**, by Edwin Vernon (1s. 6d.). **Butterfly Migration**, by C. B. Williams (1s.). **An Introduction to Beekeeping**, by Colin G. Butler (1s. 3d.). **Railways of Britain, No. 1—Southern Section** (1s. 6d.). (*Daily Mail* School-Aid Publications).

We have received copies of the above publications. They are all in the Young Britain Educational Series, the same series in which "Good Films: How to Appreciate Them", by Jympson Harman, appeared.

**Alessandro Nevski di S. M. Eisenstein, L'Ammiraglio Nakimov di Vsevolod I. Pudovkin, Le Due Orfanelle di David W. Griffith, La Fin di San Pietrobergo di Vsevolod I. Pudovkin, Shoulder Arms—The Kid di Charles Chaplin, L'Uomo di Aran di Robert J. Flaherty.** (Federazione Italiana dei Circoli del Cinema.)

Each of these pamphlets contains the credits of the film with which it is concerned and sometimes also a synopsis. Each gives an account of the work and career of the director and a detailed bibliography of publications which contain further information about that director.

**Album de Farrebique: Textes et Dialogues de Georges Rouquier**. (Paris, Fortuny, 1947.)

The album contains the text and dialogue from the film *Farrebique*, which won the Grand Prix de la Critique Internationale at Cannes in 1946 and the Grand Prix du Cinema Francais at Paris in 1946. This lovely film consists merely of the simple, everyday history of a peasant family throughout the cycle of the four seasons. The album is fully illustrated by excellent, full-page reproductions of stills, which give some idea of the beauty of the photography in the film.

**Amelux Fototolk: Vierbaar, Verklaarend Woordenboek Voor Fotografie en Cinematografie**, by J. J. M. van Santen. (Bloemendaal, Focus N.V.)

This useful dictionary of technical terms in photography and cinematography is divided into four sections: the first gives terms in English and Dutch, the second in French and Dutch, the third in German and Dutch, and each of these three sections is accompanied by many definitions and explanations in Dutch. The fourth part gives the terms in Dutch, English, French and German. At the end of the book there are various diagrams of photographic and cinematographic apparatus, the nomenclature for each part being given in the four languages.

**The Year Book of the Association of Cinematographers and Allied Technicians**. (A. Vernon Free for the Association of Cine Technicians, 1947. 2s. 6d.)

As Mr. Anthony Asquith writes in his introduction to the Year Book, the object was "to try and put together" in a book of modest size the everyday information of which many working technicians are constantly in need. This object seems to have been successfully achieved. The book includes a list, with details, of trade associations, production companies, studios, newsreels, laboratories, recording, cutting and projection facilities, also Board of Trade film returns (English and foreign), 1938-46, tables of weather statistics, raw-stock data and details of colour processes available in Great Britain.

**Daily Mail Film Award Annual: British Films of 1947**, edited by Jeffrey Truby. (Winchester Publications, 1948. 10s. 6d.)

This annual contains an article on the advance made in British films, another on previous *Daily Mail* Film Awards, followed by the synopses and credits of the 56 films eligible for the 1948 Award. The book is almost overpoweringly fully illustrated.

**Sound Films in Education: an Interim Report by the Advisory Committee dealing with the Place of the Sub-Standard Sound Film in the General Provision for Visual Education in Schools, with a Historical Survey**, issued by the Scottish Film Council and Scottish Educational Film Association. (Scottish Film Council, 1948. 2s. 6d.)

This report includes an account of the experiments conducted in Fife. There is a section giving interim views on the place of the sound film, another on the proposals for the further development of the investigation, with suggested experiments, another on the interim findings. There follows an historical survey (1922-1947), concerned mainly with the development of the educational sound film as a teaching aid. At the end of the book there is a useful list of the publications referred to in this survey.

**Les Visiteurs du Soir**, by Jacques Prevert and Pierre Laroche. (Paris, Nouvelle Edition.)

This is another of the scripts of French film classics, which are being published in a uniform edition. There is a preface by Pierre Mac Orlan and the script is followed by a number of extracts from the press, published during the German occupation, when the film was first shown and when, for that reason, the choice of extracts was rather limited. The book is illustrated by a portrait of Arletty and by stills from the film.

**No Royal Road**, an autobiography by David Farrar. (London, Mortimer Publications, 1947. 7s. 6d.)

David Farrar gives a vivid account of the course of his career via Fleet Street to the stage and screen and of the many and varied experiences which it involved. It is fully illustrated by reproduction of photographs and stills.

**Marie Louise: Erzählung**, by Richard Schweizer. (Zürich, Oprecht, 1945.)

This is the novel of the Praesens-Film, *Marie Louise*, made in 1943 and directed by Leopold Lindtberg. It is illustrated by twelve good reproductions of stills from the film.

**Photography To-day, 1947-48**, edited by Harold Lewis. (Photography, 1947. 21s.)

This well-produced book has a section on Films and Film Strips, edited by Alex Strasser, which contains articles on Film in Science and Industry, by Stephen Ackroyd (Film Centre), Film in Education, by D. George Bennell (Shell Education and Visual Aids), Making Factual Films, by Alex Strasser (Realist Film Unit), Use and Production of Film Strips, by Ian Carter (Editor, Common Ground, Ltd.), 16 mm. versus 35 mm., by Alex Strasser, and Sub-Standard Film and Equipment, by R. Howard Crick (Secretary of the British Kinematograph Society). There are several pages of excellently reproduced stills from films and frames from film strips to illustrate these articles.

**The Theatre, the Cinema and Ourselves**, by Cyril Bruyn Andrews. (Clarendon House Press, 1947. 7s. 6d.)

In this book the author first describes the changes which are taking place in stage and screen, how acting as Irving understood it, for example, is disappearing. He then deals with the challenges presented by the cinema and theatre to-day,

including various recent interpretations of Hamlet. He shows that nowadays "we seldom moralize about good and evil . . . We prefer . . . to moralize about our blindness to facts". He has a section on boys and girls, another on the young women on the stage and screen to-day. This seems, in a way, rather a vague and superficial survey, with ideas classified and chosen at random from a wide field. The volume is slim and so fully illustrated, chiefly by reproductions of interesting photographs and stills, that, when one gets down to bedrock, there does not seem to be much letterpress.

**The Film in Education: A Brief Summary of Suggestions for Improvements in the Presentation of Films to Children in Schools**, by Members of the Cine Section Committee of the Photographic Dealers' Association. (Photographic Dealers' Association, Cine Section, 1948.)

This sixteen-page brochure should be "of interest to school authorities, public bodies and industrial undertakings" and is "intended to indicate certain principles of projection efficiency". It includes a diagram of a projection layout for school rooms.

**Film: A Reader's Guide**, by Roger Manvell. (Cambridge University Press for the National Book League, 1947. 1s.) This readers' guide consists of a brief but succinct survey of the position of the film and its literature at the present day, by Roger Manvell, followed by a list of books on the film, compiled by W. A. Munford, Borough Librarian of Cambridge, in consultation with Roger Manvell. This guide should be useful to all those who take an interest in the film but particularly perhaps to those who propose to make a study of the subject for the first time.

**The Right Way to Write for the Films**, by Moresby White and Freda Stock. "Right Way" Books. (Rolls House Press, 1948. 5s.)

This book seems to cover all sides of the technique of preparation and presentation in film writing. There are chapters on visualising, choosing a subject, story construction, treatment, adaptation, types of film and film titles, on the script, dialogue, specialised films and marketing a film story. There is also a specimen film synopsis. This book should be much in request as, although a good deal has been published about writing for the screen in the past, few of the old books remain in print in this country at the present time, and there is little up-to-date material. Moreover, the price of the book is extremely reasonable.

**Reading, Film and Radio Tastes of High School Boys and Girls**, by W. J. Scott. Educational Research Series, No. 28. (Christchurch, New Zealand, Whitcombe and Tombs; London, Oxford University Press, for the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1947. 10s.)

This book is complementary to Professor I. A. Gordon's "The Teaching of English: a Study in Secondary Education" (New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1946). In his preface, Mr. Scott thanks nearly four thousand girls and boys who provided the material for his survey, the principals of nineteen schools and the

teachers. The volume is the outcome of the author's investigations into the private, out-of-school reading, film-going and radio listening of boys and girls. In his chapter on the cinema, he draws some conclusions from the statistics of attendance at the cinema and the types of films which prove most popular. Among other statistics, he shows the difference in frequency of attendance between pupils of various types of school, between boys and girls, between various ages and between English and New Zealand children. He discusses the influence of the film on reading and of reading on the film and the place of the film in the teaching of English. In his final chapter the author surveys the implications and conclusions drawn from his investigations and calls attention to some of the difficulties which face the teacher of English and which this investigation demonstrates.

**Abenteuer Mit Der Filmkamera**, by Paul Lieberenz. (Berlin, Minerva, 1946.)

In this little book, Paul Lieberenz gives an account of the many exciting, unusual and often amusing experiences which came his way while he was making films of wild animals and other interesting subjects in Liberia, Abyssinia, the interior of Asia, in Lapland, in the Cameroons and elsewhere during the period between the wars. The book is illustrated by reproductions of lively pen and ink drawings.

**A.B.C's of Visual Aids and Projectionist's Manual**, by Philip Manzano. (State College, Pa., Philip Manzano, 1947.)

As the author writes in the preface to his book, "Now that the value of projected pictures has become recognized so widely, the chief problem is to place the necessary equipment and trained personnel in the schools". This little book includes chapters on general facts about 35, 16 and 8 mm. films, the selection of visual equipment, projecting 16 mm. sound motion pictures, servicing sound motion picture equipment and much useful miscellaneous information connected with visual aids.

**Aux Portes de la Nuit: le Roman d'un Film**, by Marcel Lapierre. (Paris, Nouvelle Edition, 1946.)

This book gives some account of the

work and career of Marcel Carne, who directed the film, *Les Portes de la Nuit*, and of Jacques Prevert, the scenarist. There follows a synopsis of the film. The major part of the book, however, consists of a journal kept by the author during the production of the film, and this gives an interesting insight into the methods used and the difficulties encountered and overcome. The book is illustrated by photographs taken during the production.

**Film Sponsor**. (Current Affairs, monthly, 1s. 6d. per copy, 15s. per annum).

This periodical, which begins publication with the April number, is being issued by the publishers of *The Film User*. It is intended "for those who sponsor films in government, industry, associations and public bodies" and fills a want which has been increasingly felt during the last few years. The present issue contains articles by Donald Alexander, Edgar Anstey, Alec Bristow and others, and a feature, which is to appear monthly, of sponsorship news from overseas. Three pages are devoted to recently released sponsored films. We wish this new venture in journalism every success.

**Bette Davis: A Biography**, by Peter Noble. (Skelton Robinson, 1948, 8s. 6d.).

Out of the 232 pages of this book, more than half are devoted to a list of all Bette Davis' films from 1931 to 1947, together with casts and credits, in order of their release in America. The remainder of the book consists of an interesting account of the work of an excellent actress, who has been said by some, as quoted in the introduction, to have "too much brain, too little heart." The book is illustrated by reproductions of photographs and stills from Bette Davis' films.

**Survey of Pictorial Materials**, List No. 2, 16 mm. films. Biographical Subjects (National Federation of Educational Film Groups, Colmer's Farm School, Rubery, Birmingham. 3s. 2d. post free).

This, the second of the admirable lists being compiled by the National Federation of Educational Film Groups, provides a classified survey of all significant films dealing with the Universe, the World, Man at Work, Commerce and Communications, the History of Geography, Customs, Survivals and the Countries of the World. Although the list does not give summaries of the contents of films or any assessment of their educational value, it does give a guide to the treatment of its subject by each particular film. The present catalogue is complete up to January 31st, 1948, and will be invaluable for all teachers using classroom films.

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